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INSIDE

MEMORIAL DAY May 26, 2003



Memorial Day

The 2004 Memorial Day celebration is all set, according to the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, which confirmed through a statement that events geared to honor fallen, present, and future comrades have now been finalized.

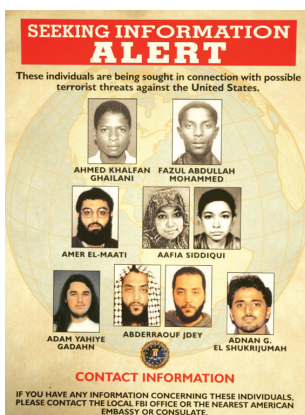
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Milestone

A total of 62 students from Koblerville Elementary School earned promotions to the junior high school educational level yesterday, receiving certificates of completion during the school's end of the year farewell ceremony.

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Terror Suspects

America's top law enforcement officials urged the public Wednesday to help the FBI track down seven suspected al-Qaida operatives and avert an attack on U.S. soil that a stream of credible intelligence indicates could occur in the summer.

Page 24



SHAN SEMAN

'OTSO-OTSO'

Students of the San Antonio kindergarten class give a creditable dance performance with their rendition of the ubiquitous *Otso-Otso*, which has become their generation's version of the grown-ups' *Macarena*. The children performed for their parents, teachers, relatives, and friends during their graduation ceremony yesterday morning.

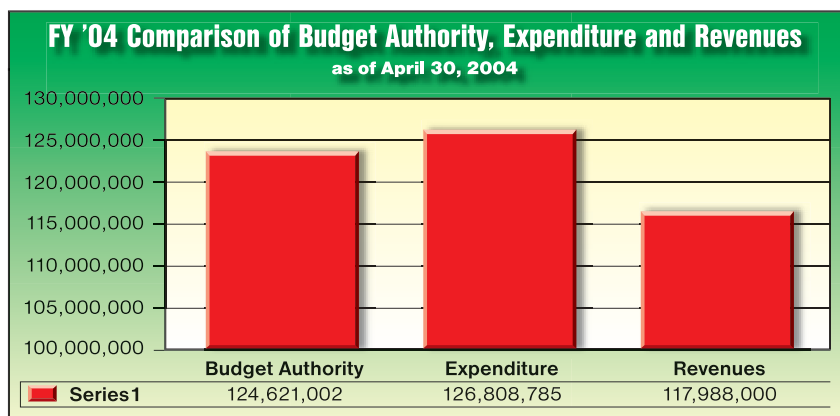
\$118M revenue vs \$126M expenses

Govt revenue streams show spotty performance

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The CNMI government collected an estimated \$118.7 million in General Revenue funds during the first seven months of fiscal year 2004—a .08 percent increase from collections made in October 2002-April 2003.

The government also noted that, from October 2003 to April 30, 2004, the CNMI government had a budget authority of \$124.62 million, yet its expendi-



tures shot up to \$126.8 million during the same period.

In a report submitted by the Department of Finance to Gov. Juan N. Babauta covering the period from the start of the fiscal year to April 30, 2004, the CNMI government noted the following changes in its revenue streams:

- an 18.2-percent increase in its amusement machine licenses collection from \$3.4 million to \$4.3 million;
- a 10.3-percent increase in the Immigration and Alien Registration fees, from \$1.5 million to \$1.7 million;
- excise taxes increased by 9 percent

See \$118M on Page 12

'Stateless kids' ratchet up campaign

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

Stateless individuals in the Commonwealth disclosed plans yesterday to step up their lobbying efforts for the U.S. government to grant them citizenship, now that the CNMI government has provided them relief by giving

them "Immediate Relative" status.

At least 30 stateless individuals trooped yesterday morning to the House of Representatives' session hall to witness the signing of House Bill 14-97, a measure that amended the law that defines the "immediate relative status" for those under the age of 21.

Section 2(a) of the bill amends the

definition of "Immediate Relative" so that these children of alien workers born in the CNMI between Jan. 1, 1974 and Nov. 3, 1986 don't lose their IR status after reaching the age of 21.

This also means that the affected individuals that are currently IR's of nonresident workers won't lose that IR

See STATELESS on Page 12

Callaghan pleads not guilty in traffic case

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Public information officer Peter A. Callaghan pleaded not guilty during his traffic case arraignment yesterday at the CNMI Superior Court.

Callaghan, together with his counsel, former associate justice Edward Manibu-

san, appeared at his 1:30pm schedule in the courtroom of associate judge Juan T. Lizama.

His next appointment in court, a status conference, is set on July 26.



Callaghan

Callaghan was issued a summons last week in connection with his involvement in a car accident on May 4.

Information filed in court by the Attorney General's Office said that Callaghan allegedly failed to provide needed information and failed to stop immediately when he got involved in the accident,

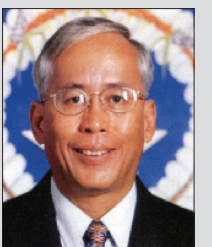
See CALLAGHAN on Page 12

Senate overrides veto on two bills

Sen. Pete Reyes mustered enough support from his fellow legislators and secured majority votes to override a veto made by Gov. Juan N. Babauta on his two bills—the Marianas Visitors Authority and DNA measures.

The Senate on its Wednesday session on Rota overrode Babauta's veto on Senate Bill 14-11, a measure that makes DNA testing an option in child support cases; and Senate Bill 14-13, which restricts

See SENATE on Page 12



Reyes

Local

Contractor sues CPA over Tinian project

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

A contractor yesterday asked for a judicial review of the Commonwealth Ports Authority’s decision to deny its appeal over the awarding of a construction project on Tinian.

ASC Arch Structure Corp., which does business as ASC Construction, said that CPA’s actions were “arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.”

In papers filed through its lawyer, Steven Woodruff, ASC said that it submitted the lowest bid of \$2.567 million last year but the project, an improvement work for the West Tinian International Airport terminal, was awarded to AIC Marianas, which it said had a \$2.651 million bid.

ASC also accused CPA of breach of contract in its alleged failure to observe good faith and fair dealing, thus exposing ASC to damages from loss of profits.

The company asked the Superior Court for temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief.

It asked the court to set aside CPA’s decision and to order the agency to award the contract to ASC or alternatively, to pay ASC expectative damages and reimburse its costs of bid and protest, as well as attorneys’ fees.

In its complaint, ASC said that CPA issued its invitation for bid for construction of certain airport terminal improvement on Tinian in April 2003. It said that the IFB was amended twice—in June and July 2003. The bid was opened on Aug. 1, 2003.

On Oct. 31, 2003, ASC said that CPA wrote to say that its [ASC’s] bid was non-responsive because its bond company, Equitable Insurance Co., is not U.S. treasury-listed. CPA further said that the exemption for that requirement was not available upon the advise of the Attorney General’s Office.

But ASC said that CPA’s rejection of ASC’s preferred surety was based on “nothing more than a memo” from the assistant attorney general to the director of technical division of the Department of Public Works dated Oct. 23, 2003.

The plaintiff said the memo

was “an inadequate basis and likely ultra vires in several respects.”

ASC said it timely filed a protest with CPA on Nov. 11, 2003.

On Nov. 20, it said that the DPW Secretary wrote to CPA advising it that the proper course where there is a problem with the surety “is to give the construction company the opportunity to select a different bonding company.” ASC said that CPA ignored the secretary’s position.

On Jan. 26, 2004, CPA executive director Carlos Salas reportedly denied ASC’s protest, which was timely appealed by the company on Feb. 10. On April 6, the CPA appeal committee reportedly affirmed Salas’ decision.

ASC filed a timely appeal on April 21, requesting for a reconsideration of the committee’s decision. On April 26, the committee issued its final order, maintaining its previous position.

On May 13, the CPA reportedly certified that the construction services are “urgently needed” and asserted that the “award and execution of contract with the lowest responsible bidder, AIC Marianas, will be advantageous to CPA.”

Ayuyu to push for DPS accreditation

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Major Juan M. Ayuyu stressed yesterday that getting the Department of Public Safety accredited by the Commission Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies is his primary concern as newly appointed acting Police Director, which became effective last May 16.

Ayuyu said that, although he is faced with many tasks, his main goal is to push for the accreditation.

“There are over 400 standards that must be established in order for that [accreditation] to be possible, and I have been tasked to do that,” he said.

Ayuyu, who replaced Maj. Bertha C. Tudela, said the accreditation is a long-term goal that could be expected 18 months from now.

“There is a long process ahead of us, and [in order] to get considered for the accreditation, we must meet the minimum standard of CALEA. As I mentioned earlier, there are about 400 standards, and we have to meet the minimum required to be recognized by CALEA.”

The Police chief said he ex-

pects to hit the minimum standard by the end of this year.

“I intend to accomplish that at least by the end of the year. Hopefully, we will get recognized, and from there, we can work toward accreditation. I will work on policies and procedures necessary to meet this goal.”

Among the tasks Ayuyu said he would address are operational problems, including personnel, equipment, and training.

“I have a monumental task,” he said. “There are a lot of things I would like to see implemented. Getting the department accredited, and at the same time maintain professionalism within the ranks.”

Ayuyu also expressed his desire to include departments in Rota and Tinian in the accreditation process.

“Getting accredited by CALEA helps in networking, federal grant assistance and across-the-board transfer or relationship with other departments nationwide,” Ayuyu said.

Ayuyu earned an Associate degree in Police Science at the Honolulu Community College. He then earned his bachelor’s degree in Criminology at University of Hawaii Manoa in 1982. He was employed as a

detective upon arrival on Saipan and at one point, served as supervisor of the Patrol Section. He then transferred to the Rota DPS. He was hired as Assistant Chief for the Division of Corrections six years ago. He also taught in the Police Academy and said he “will continue providing service training.”

“With Corrections, I was developing policies under the American Corrections Association as well as local CNMI and federal laws,” he said. “I was also heavily involved in the planning and designing of the new prison facility. As a member of the prison task force, I worked with consultants and architects in designing and developing the overall program.”

Earlier, DPS commissioner Edward Camacho explained the transition phase that resulted in Ayuyu taking over the post.

“In no way was this transition done in criticism of the past leadership. It is a step for continuous improvement. I must add that the only thing constant in the department is change. There are a lot of changes and we’ll always have it...but it does not mean the past leadership was not good. The best can be made better.”

diabetes
+green

DOL proposed regs raise fees, allow casual work

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

The Department of Labor’s proposed regulations aim to raise the nonresident workers’ surety bond and other fees. It would also allow casual employment of workers and temporary transfers within the same business.

DOL legal counsel Kevin Lynch and Division of Labor director Dean Tenorio said the bond’s coverage would be equal to six months’ wages from the current two or three months’ wages.

Lynch said the current amount has been deemed insufficient in today’s standards, noting that the current regulations had not been changed since its adoption in 1988.

“The current amount is inadequate given the fact that medical costs, transport costs, etc. have substantially increased since 1988,” Lynch said.

He said the medical coverage would also increase to \$10,000 under the proposed rules.

Other changes would also include the elimination of exit requirement for immediate relatives prior to working in the CNMI as well as allowing for casual employment.

“This [casual employment] is a new concept,” said Tenorio.

Under the proposal, casual employment would allow for eight hours of work within 30 days. This still may change because the proposed regulations remain open to public comments.

Under the proposal, temporary transfers may also be allowed in certain businesses such as the hotel, garment, and construction.

But DOL officials noted that temporary transfers would be subject to conditions to prevent abuses such as the tendency to share employee’s time among sister or affiliate companies.

Overall, Lynch said the proposed regulations hope to bring stricter provisions to protect law-abiding employers and employees and to prevent abuses in the system.

The proposal’s “doubly hot issue,” acknowledges Lynch, is allowing nonresident workers to have more than one job.

But he said, “the reason there is to give greater flexibility for both employers and employees” to hire or get hired, especially during certain seasons without having to bring in additional people to the CNMI from off-island.

Lynch noted that the proposed multiple job provision basically holds the primary employer responsible for housing and medical cost—except for the medical costs incurred as a result of second employment—of a nonresident worker.

The proposed regulations would also limit the work time of the employee in the second employment.

Responding to the concern on the possible rise in medical cost as a result of “overworked” and “stressed out” workers, DOL officials said they hope that employees would use their sound judgment that “they won’t work the employees to death.”

Tenorio admits that the proposed regulations would result in more paperwork for employers and employees to get things done.

The department was heavily criticized when it initially raised the issue of second jobs for nonresident workers last year. The local community generally opposed it believing that it would take jobs

away from local residents.

Authorities noted that multiple work or part-time jobs for alien workers is not prohibited under the existing Nonresident Workers Act.

They said that the policy

shift should have been done a long time ago.

The issue surfaced only recently following a court decision that essentially acknowledged that a nonresident worker is not prohibited from

getting more than one job in the CNMI.

Lynch and Tenorio spoke during yesterday’s Society of Human Resources and Management forum at the Hyatt Regency Hotel’s Giovanni Restaurant.

conwood

mcdo
cmyk

Natural cause seen in motel death

An autopsy conducted Wednesday at the Commonwealth Health Center on the woman found dead at a motel showed that she died of natural causes relating to her medical history.

According to Department of Public Safety public information officer Sgt. Thomas A. Blas Jr., the findings of the examination conducted by Dr. Aurelio Espinola, chief medical examiner from Guam, showed no signs or evidence of injury that ties in with foul play and suicide.

The woman, 34-year-old Sun Hee Lee, was found dead at the San Jose Motel located behind San Jose Church on May 20.

The Department of Public Safety received a call at 1:04pm requesting authorities to check on an individual found unresponsive in one of the rooms of the establishment.

Police report indicated that police and medics responded to the scene and found Lee in room No. 18.

The victim was brought to the Commonwealth Health Center, where she was pronounced dead by Dr. Leon Hart.

Investigation showed that the victim was seen by tenants of the establishment between 5:30am and 6am on the said date. According to the tenants, the victim seemed fine.

Later in the afternoon, an employee went to check on the victim in her room and received no response. The employee managed to open the door and discovered the victim in bed and unresponsive. The report also showed that the victim had a history of illness and had been under medication.

(Shan Seman)

cb cruz

Agriculture Fair Silver Jubilee kicks off today

After months of preparation, the Saipan Agriculture Fair Association, along with proud sponsors, assisting government agencies, and most especially farmers and ranchers, will finally see the fruit of their labor as the 2004 Saipan Agriculture Fair unfolds today at the Civic Center in Susupe.

Kicking off the 25th Anniversary celebration are a series of game events. The curtain will be raised at 6pm, with participants pressing their luck in bingo games.

The cockfight event also opens at 6pm and will run through to midnight.

The official opening ceremony will be held tomorrow at 9am, featuring remarks from several dignitaries.

Activities tomorrow include judging of the Plant division from 6-9am, judging of the Animal division from 8-12pm; placing of ribbons on winners on the two divisions between 10am-2pm.

Tomorrow's activities also include the Ba'tu events from

11am-6pm, Greasy Pig Contest at 4pm, the Greasy Pole Climbing Contest at 5pm, and the Coconut Husking/Grinding Competition at 6pm.

The Ba'tu events, Greasy Pig Chasing, Greasy Pole Climbing, and Coconut Husking/Grinding events will continue on Sunday, May 30 at the same times mentioned above.

The fair highlights the celebration of May as Mes Lancheros. The renovated 4-H Club Building will be used for the plant division, while the animal division will be featured at the field just east of the building and the ornaments at the Civic Center basketball court.

Farmers and ranchers began registering crops or animals last Monday, May 24. The deadline for the Animal division registration is tomorrow, May 29, while deadline for the Plant division is today at 10pm. Each person must pay a fee of \$10 plus an additional \$1 for each entry for both the Plant and Animal divisions.



2004 Liberation Fest meeting

The Liberation Committee would like to call on all individuals and parties with interests relating to the 2004 Liberation Parades and Float Competition. The committee would also like to meet with Entertainers, Ethnic Dancers and Performers to discuss participation in this year's Liberation Festivities. The meeting will take place on May 29, Saturday, at 7pm at the Multi-Purpose Center.

To all the CNMI Cursillistas

The schedule of events at the Maturana House of Prayer in preparation for the 8th Cursillo Men's Weekend of May 28-31, 2004 are:

Friday May 28 4:30pm Eucharistic Celebration for Staff
6:30pm Candidates Registration
7:30pm Welcoming

Sunday May 30 12pm High Noon

Monday May 31 5:30pm Clausura

For more information, contact Stan Benavente 288-7826 or Pai Taitano 664-2244/234-1103.

Taekwondo Youth Summer Camp

The Ada Gym Taekwondo Club will be hosting a Taekwondo Summer Camp this June and July, 2004. Registration will be held on May 25, Tuesday, and May 27, Thursday, from 4pm through 6pm, and on May 29, Saturday, from 10am until noon at the Ada Gym Taekwondo Room. This is an introductory course for the beginning student of martial arts. Classes will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:30pm until 6pm starting June 1 and ending July 29. For more information, contact Master Ron Loctao at 288-5128.

Celebration at the Park

On May 31, Memorial Day, the CNMI will be paying tribute to fallen members of the U.S. Armed Forces, remembering those who served the nation so that its citizens may enjoy the fruits of a democratic society.

"We would like to invite all veterans, their families, families of those departed veterans, the local Marine Scout, and the public to come and join us celebrate this memorable day at the Veterans Memorial Park in Susupe at 9am," according to the Veterans Affairs Office.

LibDay concession forms available

Food concession application forms for the upcoming Liberation Day Festival are now available for pick up at the Arts Council office. For more information, call Angel S. Hocog at 322-9982/3 or George Fitial at 664-2568/9.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE JAN OF MAY 2004									
DEPARTURES					ARRIVALS				
Saipan-Honolulu					Honolulu-Saipan				
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Torres to speak to teachers’ group

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

Former congressman and education commissioner William S. Torres will serve as guest speaker in tomorrow’s meeting of teacher representatives at the Multi-Purpose Hall in Susupe.

Public school teacher representative Ambrose Bennett said yesterday that Torres will give his account on the history of the CNMI Constitution and teacher groups.

“He is an authority on this subject. He knows it very well,” said Bennett.

Meantime, he said that a teachers’ manifesto that lists 27

priority goals for teachers will be presented tomorrow.

Among others, the manifesto lists the promotion of a stronger working relationship among teachers, administration, State Board of Education, and the CNMI government “driven by collective bargaining agreement.”

Among its priorities are the need to address basic supply needs, communication and information links; copiers in schools; to modify teachers’ contracts to include the phrase “termination based on cause”; extension of contract terms; inclusion of all librarians and teacher aides in the bargaining agreement; review of teachers’ incentives; to

purse legislation allowing U.S. recruited teachers to own house and lot; and to pursue legislative action authorizing teachers to have control over some funds for classroom purposes.

Bennett said the goals stated in the manifesto were generated through a survey of 273 teachers from 12 of the 19 schools in the CNMI.

Bennett is also pushing for the signing of a recognition agreement with the BOE on teachers’ collective bargaining power.

He said such agreement aims to recognize a bargaining agent for teachers within PSS and to empower the recognized agent to negotiate with the board on related issues.

Domestic abusers, watch out!

By **EDITH G. ALEJANDRO**
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta will give more teeth to measures that would curb the rising number of domestic violence in the CNMI when he signs the bill that would criminalize domestic abuse behavior.

At 11am today, Babauta would sign House Bill 14-5 or the Domestic Violence Criminal Act in a ceremony at the Governor’s Office. The Senate passed the measure during its Wednesday session on Rota with majority vote.

Among others, the bill would include the crime of stalking to the Commonwealth Criminal Code.

The measure would also provide escalating penalties for repeat offenders and require law enforcement officers to advise and assist victims in providing medical attention and emergency shelter.

Under the proposed measure, added to the existing statute are misdemeanor cases that include interference with domestic violence report, unlawful contact, violation of order protection, duties of law enforcers, notification to victims of domestic violence, mandatory arrest, course of conduct or repeated acts, bail and conditions of release in domestic violence cases, and mandatory sentencing.

The new measure would also amend 6 CMC Section 4113 to prohibit the court from granting suspended imposition of sentence on any defendants convicted of a crime involving domestic violence. Also, the measure provides protection of the confidentiality of communication between the victim and her/his counselor.

The House Committee on Health and Welfare said that additional funding is necessary for

the enforcement purposes, adding that the benefit of ensuring the safety and protection of CNMI residents far outweigh any additional cost to be incurred.

“The [proposed] Act revises current statutes and supplements the Code to add some new provisions, to give our judges the tools to fashion appropriate bail and probation conditions to protect victims from those who abuse them on a long-term basis. It codifies the policy of mandatory arrest, to help break the inter-generational cycle of violence by letting children see police come and take the perpetrator away in handcuffs. It provides new offenses designed to criminalize unlawful contact, stalking, interference with attempts to report domestic violence crimes, and violating orders of protections,” Rep. Benjamin Seman, who introduced the bill, said.

Memorial Day starts with Sunday Mass

By **SHAN SEMAN**
REPORTER

The 2004 Memorial Day celebration is all set.

This, according to the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, which confirmed through a statement that events geared to honor fallen, present, and future comrades have now been finalized.

Kicking off the celebration is a special Mass service this Sunday, May 30, 9am, at the Mount Carmel Cathedral. The service is dedicated to all active duty military members, reservists, local marine scouts, and veterans who have participated or have been deployed in the past and present to any areas of conflicts around the world. The service is also dedi-

cated to military members who may be deployed in the future.

The statement encourages all families and the public to attend the Mass.

A ceremony will also take place on Memorial Day, May 31, at the Veterans Memorial Park in Susupe at 9am.

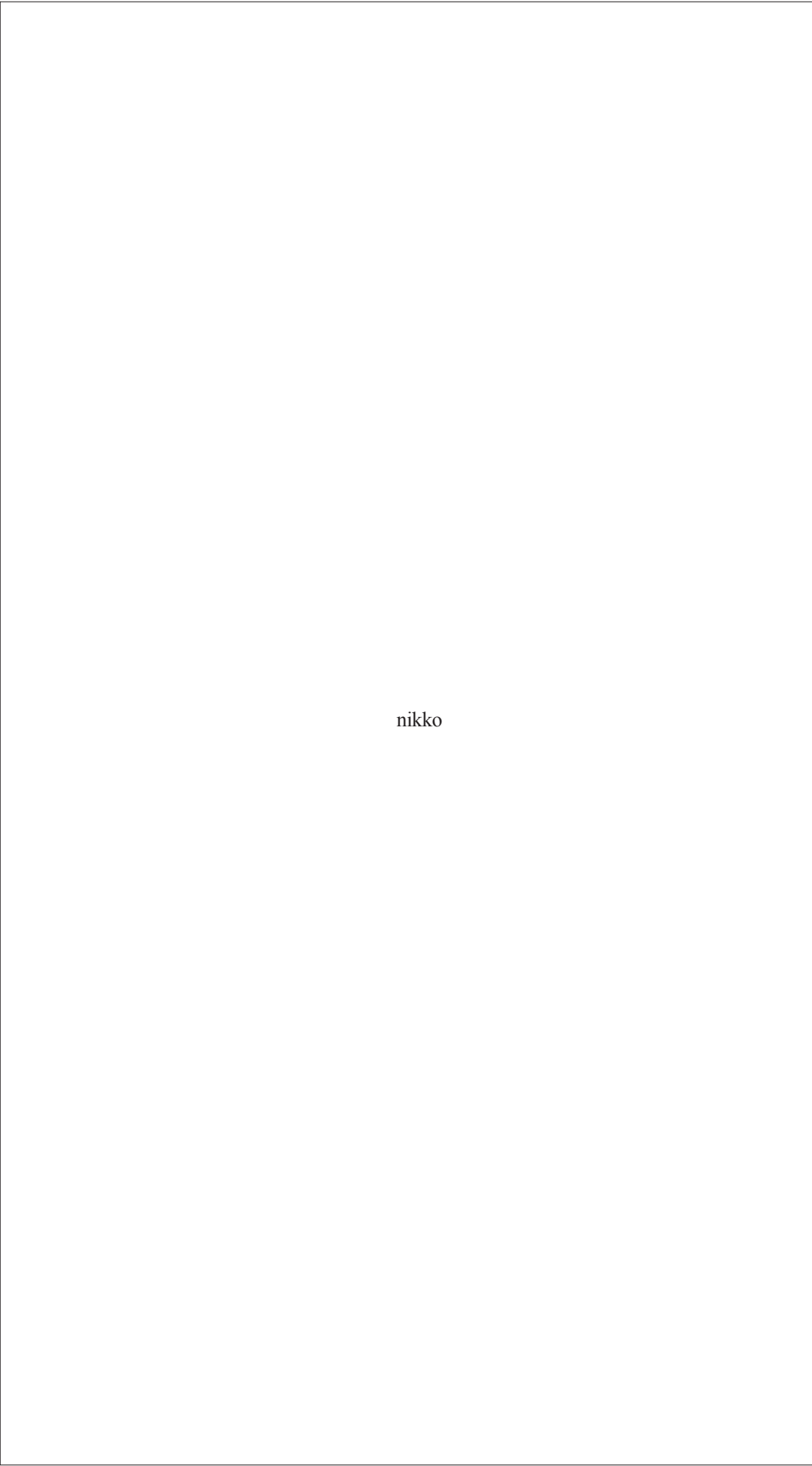
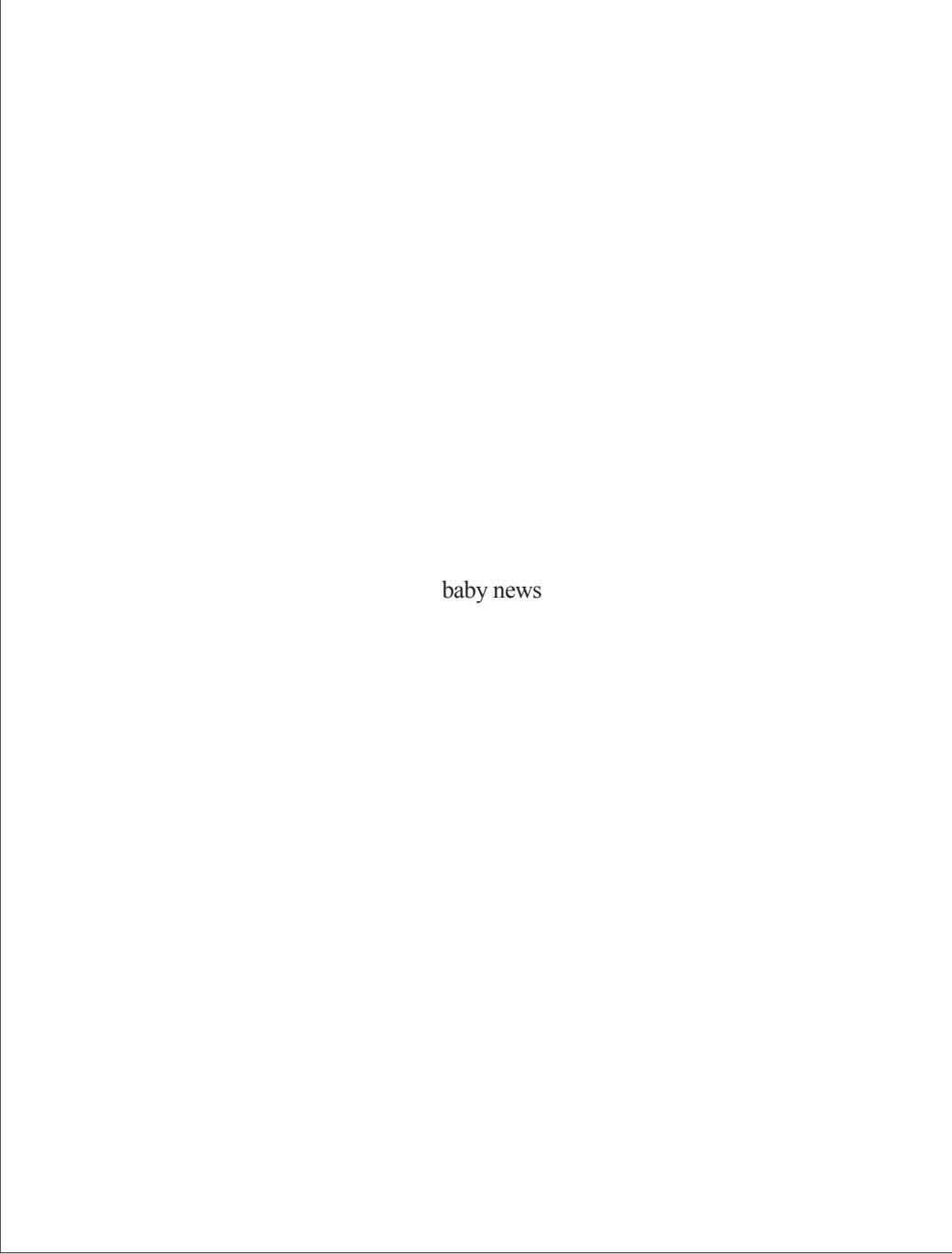
“We will be paying tribute to members of the U.S. Armed Forces who are no longer with us. We will remember those who served our great nation so that we may enjoy the fruits of a democratic society,” according to the statement.

Rear Admiral Arthur J. Johnson, the U.S. Pacific Command Representative for Guam, CNMI, FSM, and Palau will serve as the keynote speaker.

The ceremony also includes the laying of wreaths by acting Gov. Diego T. Benavente, Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela, members of the VFW Post 3457, members of the CNMI Veterans Association, and members of the U.S. Armed Forces Association.

A 21-gun salute will also dedicated to the fallen comrades. It will be conducted by Company E, 100th Battalion, 442nd (SEP) Infantry of the U.S. Army Reserve.

JROTC battalions from Saipan Southern High School, Kagman High School, and Marianas High School will also be in attendance and pre-ceremonial music and the national anthems will be played by the Saipan Southern High School’s Pacific Winds Concert Band.



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Opinion

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By MOHAMMAD ASHRAF, PH.D.

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The effects of a decline in the garment sector

Q. Here's a question I am interested in asking for your column: If the garment industry starts to reduce its workforce, should the CNMI be concerned? Would there be an immediate impact and if so, what would that be?

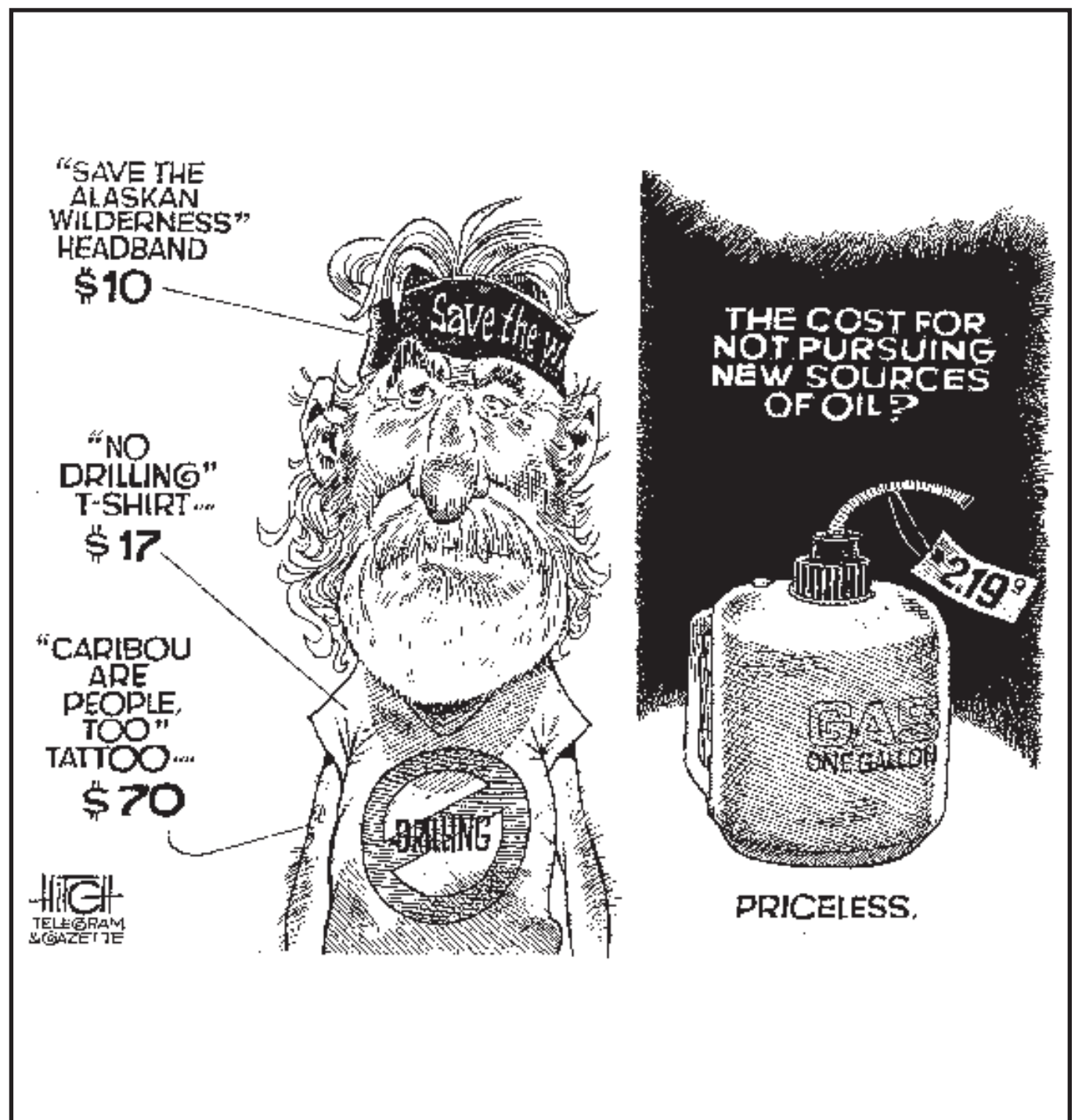
A. Garment industry is one of the main pillars of the CNMI's economy. Both public and private sectors depend on it in many different ways. Since this dependence extends well over a decade, the result is that the mainframe of the CNMI's economy is built around it. When this frame of economic structure becomes shaky due to reduction in workforce, the CNMI should not only be concerned but alarmed. To date, there is seemingly no realistic alternative on the drawing board that can automatically trigger support to such an expected shock to the economy. The likely timing of reduction in workforce is known but it is the unknown rate of reduction that will determine how much social, political, and economic chaos we will get into, as this process takes its course.

In my view, its immediate and the most severe impact will be on the farmers who heavily depend on selling their produce to this particular segment of consumers. Farmers who already have to crisscross the island to sell their produce will find themselves even in more precarious situation when the reduction in workforce becomes a reality. This view is based on the type and specific nature of demand for farm produce from this group. Similarly, the local people who have been working in this sector for a long time will have to look for jobs in the tourist industry or the government sector—the other two major sectors of the economy—for which they may not have adequate experience or skill. Another group of people most directly impacted will be the owners of properties being leased for factories and housing of workers. Finding alternative uses of these properties and providing relief to the owners will not be an easy task, at least in the short run.

The government, which has depended heavily on revenues both in the form of user fees and various other direct and indirect taxes from the garment sector, will be challenged to continue the provision of public services comparable to current level as this revenue source declines. The government will face a situation that will require an adjustment in size and a drastic reform in its structure. This task will be formidable since both of these things have significant social and political consequence.

The most severe impact will be in the long run in the form of rise in inflation, i.e., a general rise in prices and cost of living. This scenario is based on the fact that, as the volume of shipment to and from the CNMI go down, so will the reduction in economy-of-scale advantage both in ocean and air transportation. Should the trend in high fuel prices sustain or continue, a rise in inflation will take effect much sooner. In summary, it is hard to imagine who or which sector of the CNMI will not be affected as the downturn of the garment industry picks up steam. There is not much time left to think about and to take action to minimize the likely adverse impact of decline in garment sector as the implementation of new provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) are only months away.

Note: It was at the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on April 15, 1994 that it was decided to abolish quotas in the trading of garments beginning 2005. Also, GATT was transformed into World Trade Organization (WTO).



Amaze your friends

Before you get your snoot in the San Miguel for the three-day weekend, why not bone up on some economic figures? That way you can be the life of the party and amaze your friends with your knowledge, since they are already impressed with your charm and good looks.

In case you forgot to look at the May 13 edition of the Saipan Tribune, reporter Edith G. Alejandro scribed an interesting article on the results of the 2002 Economic Census. The census showed that the apparel manufacturing industry has remained the CNMI's economic mainstay, tallying \$639 million in sales. That's over twice the sales figures for the next largest sector of sales, the retail sector, which rang up \$312 million. Then, third on the list, came accommodations (a fancy word for hotels) and food services, at \$197 million.

Let's go with that hotel gig for a minute. I saw my first Saipan hotel 10 years ago this month. For most of the years since I have been deeply involved in the CNMI tourism sector. I have performed economic analysis for a variety of tourism related businesses here, and I have served as an economic consultant to the Marianas Visitors Authority (known, back then, as the "Bureau," instead of "Authority," in case you care). And I'm not just a pencil neck geek, I've also interacted in the local tourism sector as a helicopter air tour pilot and as a regional airline pilot. Meanwhile, over the years, all three newspapers in the area, the Pacific Daily News, the Marianas Variety, and, of course, the Saipan Tribune, have published interviews with me about the economy and tourism.

So you can't find a bigger booster of CNMI tourism than me.

But there's a difference between positive boosting and irresponsible delusions. Anybody who tells you that tourism can "make up" for a loss in the manufacturing sector is on the delusion side of things. Look at the math, look at the sales figures I mentioned above. The CNMI has been fortunate to have two industrial legs to stand on: Tourism (service), and garments (manufacturing). All in all, a great deal. Retail sales, by the way, are really an adjunct to these

By ED STEPHENS

Ed Stephens, Jr. is an economist and columnist for the Saipan Tribune.
"Ed4Saipan@yahoo.com"



industries, since without these industries, you'd only have a few "we accept food stamps" stores.

While we've got our noses in the economic data, consider some figures from the Burger & Comer Economic Report for 2001. Though numbers have wiggled a bit since then, the garment industry's importance was certainly easy to see. Try this on for size: The industry contributed \$65.9 million in direct revenues to the CNMI government for that year, roughly one-third of the government's budget. The details came out like so: User fees and excise taxes, \$31.8 million. Wage, salary, and income taxes, \$19.5 million. Utility payments to CUC, \$7.6 million. Labor and immigration fees, \$4.6 million. Monies to CHC and CPA came to \$2.4 million. Yeah, that's a lot of money, and you can thank the garment industry for all of it.

More data from that study: The garment industry was responsible for \$47.3 million in local purchases in 2001. That money went locally for stuff like gas, food, insurance, land leases, and so on.

Heck, just taking a look at these two figures, direct government revenues and direct sales locally, the garment industry kicked in over \$113 million in that year alone. That's more than \$2 million per week! The indirect economic activity created would be far higher than that, but that's a story for a different day.

Well, that should be enough economic data for you to impress your date with this weekend. Having fortified your mind with data, you can feel like you've earned the right to fortify your weekend with a cold San Mig. Tell 'em Ed sent you.

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

An appeal to MPLA

To MPLA, I urge you to review in-depth the offer of Azmar to mine Pagan Island. The amount they estimate on the worth of the pozzolan is very low. Azmar is a business, a corporation, which is trying to get the most out this deal, and they will pay the lowest amount possible.

I don't know if this deal has been approved, so, I would suggest it should go through the bidding process or, as some suggest, a public hearing, to get the highest bidder and best benefits for the CNMI. Just remember, this pozzolan belongs to the people of the CNMI and not to MPLA. Let's not get rushed into making a bum deal. Because just from reading the papers it's sure looking like one. Already, Azmar is trying some underhanded tactics like suggesting Swiss bank accounts or accounts in their name. The CNMI owns the pozzolan and we should take this opportunity and take our time to do it right. If Azmar gets antsy, well, tough.

The mining of Pagan has the potential to benefit the CNMI tremendously, like oil did for Saudi Arabia and all the oil-producing countries. And this is for many years to come. There are lesser grades of pozzolan and substitutes but none better than Pagan natural high quality pozzolan.

Since Pagan is one of only three known sources of high quality pozzolan in the world (two in Europe and Pagan in the Pacific), we should be setting the prices. There is a high demand for high quality pozzolan. Europe and U.S. quality standards for concrete were lowered because of the limited supply of high quality pozzolan. Thanks to Pagan volcano, there is now another supply of high quality pozzolan and it is here in the CNMI. Yes, they will pretend to balk at a higher price but that's just part of bartering. There will be others who will want to be in on this deal and they might match or offer a higher price because of the quality of the pozzolan. Just to get the pozzolan.

There are many major civil engineering projects requiring pozzolan cement around the world. Right now they have to put up with inferior quality cement. I think that they would pay a higher price for a better quality product. After all, the structures the Greeks and Romans built over 2,000 years ago are still with us today because of their use of high quality pozzolan cement.

There are rumors going around that a certain individual, associated with Azmar and this deal, has taken a certain aircraft from the waters of the CNMI without proper permission. How can we trust a company associated with this person? How can this person return to the CNMI and face us? It is my opinion that this person will try to do it to us—again.

MPLA is charged with the responsibility to get the best deal for the people of the CNMI. The mining of Pagan should be looked at very carefully. I cannot stress this strong enough, please, please, please, please take your time and get us a good deal. Because, it will be for a long time and we will have to live with the decision you make for us. So, be strong in the negotiations and don't give in to very highly paid professional negotiators who will use every tactic to get Azmar the best deal they can.

Duane R.T. Sablan

I Denni

I beg to differ

In "Letters To The Editor" Ambrose Bennett indicates or your reporter indicates that he was elected by the teachers. This is untrue. Mr. Bennett was appointed by the Governor for political reasons that I have yet to figure out. The majority of the teachers did nothing to put Mr. Bennett into his present position.

Roger Ludwick

Sadog Tasi, Saipan

An open letter to Cinta

In the summer of 1998, at your behest, I stood on the beach near Susupe as dusk fell, and spoke with a gathering of 60 or so, former Pagan Island residents.

At the time, I knew nothing about pozzolan. Frankly, as I'm sure you recall, I was thinking in terms of a fish hatchery and market distribution center to make the resettlement of Pagan, fiscally practical...not that I was ever in the fish hatchery or market distribution center business but rather, if you will, as an investment banker, I was in the "effective use of capital to solve other people's problems" business for 18 years.

You had asked me to make my comments public following what started out as a casual, lunch time conversation between you and I earlier that same day. I considered the concerns that you raised regarding the plight of the displaced Pagan Islanders legitimate and deeply felt. I sympathized. So to the gathering of former Pagan residents late that afternoon, I proctored the concept of an "Enterprise Free Zone" where the traditional cultures of the native Chamorro and Carolinian could be enriched and protected from a "Light-industrial Zone" which in turn, would financially feed the "EFZ." I had in mind a Williamsburg, Virginia vignette wherein buildings and the native way of life could be preserved inside a living time capsule for posterity. The distinction between the Pagan model and its Williamsburg counterpart was the reality of cash flow. In the instance of Pagan, it would come from revenues generated by the "Light Industrial Zone," not from the EFZ per se, given that the volume of visitors to the island would not be enough to support a tourist-based economy.

As I'm certain you recall, toward the end of my comments, a few boisterous souls shouted, "When are you are going to make this happen?" I had no plan to make it happen. Heck, I thought it was just lunch time chatter. But now I've returned (in essence) five years later with a plan. I call it The Pagan Island Resettlement and Reclamation Project. The people of Pagan asked for it. Now it's here but this is the part I'm having difficulty with. Why does this disturb you so? Have you seen our plan? It's been on the www.azmarinternational.com website since January of this year. Its genesis began that evening on the beach in Susupe. However, as you know, It really began to take shape upon receipt of a list of recommendations sent to me in 2002 by Mayor Valentine I. Taisakan. I'm sure you remember. You were given a copy of the letter, along with the permit submitted to MPLA, that grew out of it. A permit listing every detail included in the Mayor of the Northern Mariana Islands letter. Might I ask who else has done such a thing? Who else has come along in the past 20 years and laid out a specific plan to help the people of the islands in so many ways? You accuse me of trying to be all things to all people. I'm trying to make something work for the benefit of the vast majority. I don't know why you do not want to see that.

Jesse Palacios, before becoming acting Director of Commerce, and his brother Glen, per my request, kept you in the Azmar loop throughout 2003, meeting with you on several occasions. You and I directly shared many e-mails. Many were passionate and endearing. The one in which you spoke to me of the death of your father was most memorable. You are a skilled writer. All these remain in our company archives. Still, you never once raised any concern about

Advice for the Adjutant of Acrimony

Thank God and Our Lady of Victory I'm off the hook! I do not need to face the written wrath of the "Anopheles of Antagonism," that 'Adjutant of Acrimony' Mr. Ambrose Bennett. His letter of May 25th to both local papers states, "It's just a matter of time before you and all my critics come to realize that Mr. Bennett was right" and he writes further to those who agree with Ms. Juanita Malone, "Don't wait for a reply because the readers will know what you are about." The Saipan Tribune's copy of his letter does not contain the last sentence of Bennett's diatribe printed the same day in the Marianas Variety. It reads, "If there are any more people that agree with Ms. Malone and you have never fallen short of being a perfect person, then throw the next stone – but don't wait for a reply because the readers will already know what you are about." Could this letter be the next stone albeit from a very imperfect reader?

I agree with Ms. Malone on most of her points but feel verbal admonition and censure would suffice in place of paddling since age and a lack of adipose tissue might lead to more harm than good in his case. I'm being facetious. One thing Ms. Malone got wrong, however, was the statement that, "Mr. Bennett has much influence over our youth..." I daresay Mr. Bennett has close to zero influence over most students in the CNMI and even less influence among his teaching colleagues.

As a Biblical scholar and judge of others, Mr. Bennett should realize he teeters on the brink of a hellish form of hypocrisy when he places himself alone on that path of righteousness. As "Zacatecas Mexico CNMI's 2002 Scholar to Mexico Fulbright-Hays Program U.S. Dept. Of Education" as he titles himself in his teacher Rep report (received May 20, 2004 from our school's teacher rep) Bennett does no—repeat NO—justice to any form of Western democracy

the terms and conditions specified in our permit, though I had asked on several occasions for your input.

You speak out now in terms of protecting the Pagan Island environment. There have been numerous environmental impact studies done since World War II on Pagan. The most recent was by J.G. Sablan and others wanting to do exactly what Azmar International wants to do in terms of removing the pozzolan ash. Please tell me how you would go about restoring the environmental beauty of Pagan without first removing the ash? In order to be approved, why would our EIS vary from those that have already been approved? And strip-mining...come on, please. You know as well as I that no one, least of all Azmar, has ever entertained the notion of "strip-mining" Pagan. First of all, why go to the additional expense? The product we need is covering the surface.

For 20 year, Pagan's pozzolan ash has brought exactly "zero" revenue into the CNMI coffers. In fact, again as you know, MPLA has forgiven millions in debt related to Pagan. I submitted not in secret as you contend, but openly, not only to MPLA but to more than 25 key political figures throughout the CNMI in January of this year, a complete, professional business proforma with a thorough cost analysis and profit distribution profile. It's a make-sense plan, a plan wherein all stand to benefit greatly from Azmar's long-term development of Pagan. I am proud of that model. I stand by it. Apparently you believe that the 7 percent royalty stated therein is laughably small. I contend that the only thing laughable is your perception of the cost of doing business. It is essential that you and everyone throughout the CNMI understand that pozzolan is not gold. There is no well established market for it. If you don't believe me, ask John Sablan who has been trying to peddle it for years. It has been decades since end-users have seen or even heard of high-grade pozzolan. Professional sales people such as those we have at Azmar, steeped in international business trade, have to "make the market." That takes time and a considerable infusion of initial capital. We may otherwise get lucky, but as we understand the market right now, we won't be "profitable" until the second half of the second year. Sure we make money in the long run. And that's what Azmar is here for... the long run.

At one time you were thought to be a friend and an ally. I don't want to conclude that you now have some other agenda you wish to fulfill that has little to do with Pagan but frankly, you leave many people including myself who hear your words with little other choice.

Whatever your reasons might be, you obviously don't like what Azmar has put forth. Perhaps there was something I inadvertently overlooked. I would still love to hear your ideas! Glen Palacios is here in Phoenix at the moment but he'll be back on-island next week. Sit down with him and show him your plan. Cinta, you know me well enough to know that I prefer working with people to achieve common goals, not against them. My door remains open to you. Please take advantage of it. Let's try and work together for the betterment of all.

Ken Moore

Azmar International

when he tells even possible future critics that, "...readers will already know what you are about." From whence does his prescience come? Has he looked into what constitutes a voting majority or plurality throughout the U.S. and Mexico? What allogical arrogance!

My praise and respect go to BOE chair Roman Benavente who seems to be a solid steerman taking the BOE on a course with the common sense goal of 'students first.' Thank you Senot Benavente. Mr. Benavente's philosophy seems to echo that of our brother, Rodney King, who showed the world both closure and forgiveness of a profound nature when he asked the ultimate question that perhaps Mr. Bennett should ask himself when he looks in the mirror, "Can't we all get along?"

On Jan. 24, 2004 the Saipan Tribune printed my constructive proposal for a new and fair Teacher Rep election to be held before the end of SY 2003-2004. Five, months later, with students graduating and teachers going on summer break, Mr. Bennett's belated response has been to call for his first general teacher meeting since being elected. Elected—some readers may recall—by less than twenty votes less than 30 percent of all eligible voters! What a joke! He calls this meeting on the same day that more than 50 of his fellow teachers from the school where he formerly worked are involved in day-long SY 2003-2004 Promotion ceremonies. Now where is the genuine consideration for and desire to hear from those he claims to represent?

Many Teachers, Many Directions, More Elections! Estudiante Finena.

Joe Connolly

Koblerville, Saipan

Saipan Tribune

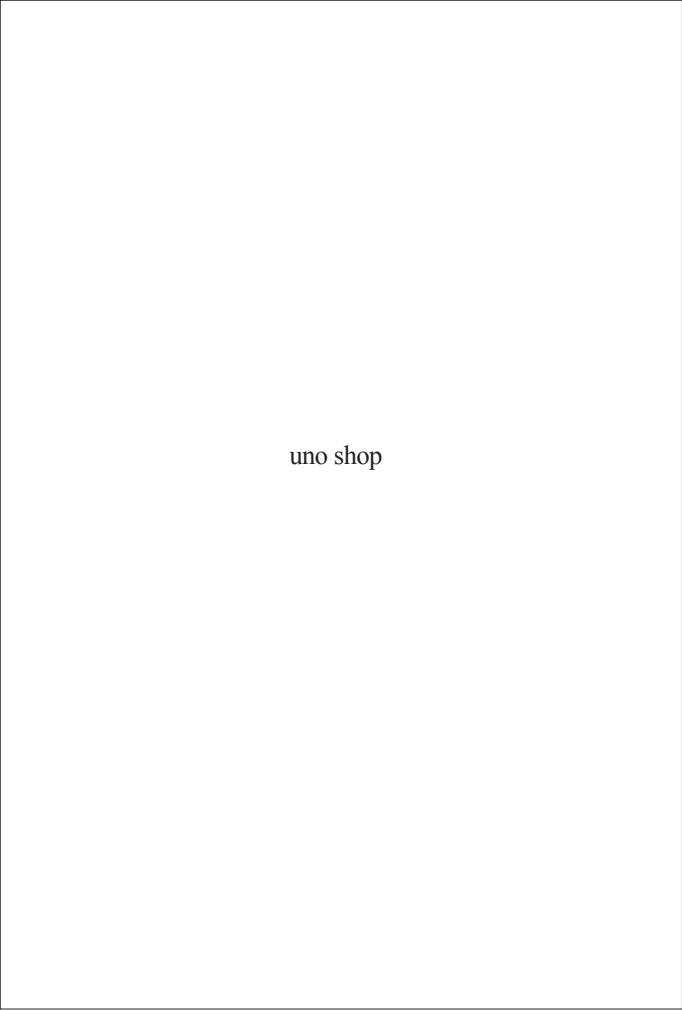
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Chicken Little....

Well now, isn’t this just too interesting? Seems that some didactic fairy tales, fables and children’s stories may be coming true right here in the CNMI!

What was it that some of our writers and speakers have been preaching for the last year or two? People like, Harry, Gonzalo, Jack T., Doc Jesus, Nicolas, Juanita, both editors of our daily newspapers and a few other well versed ladies and gents, just to mention a few. But have ANY of our “leaders” ever harkened to even the slightest



bark, woof or bay? Nary a one, so it appears! But alas!, a voice is rising. Why...is that Chicken Little’s voice I hear resounding out of the depths of the halls on high?

“The sky is falling! The sky is falling!” he told the king! And all because no less than 108 venerable U. S. congressmen have proposed identical bills in the U.S. House and Senate that suddenly have become the harbinger of disaster to the CNMI. Four or five years ago, Congress was just about ready to “federalize” the CNMI. They were persuaded to back off and, in my opinion, primarily because of the portent of a “new era” in government to be ushered in by a highly touted John Babauta. We HAD our chance three years ago—but it flew out the window along with just about every single campaign promise and platform plank it was all based on (see Jack T.’s January 2003 letter). Sure, I too voted for the man, because the potential was there. However, within a year, it became apparent that this was going to be just another attempted “ride to glory” for the power-hungry, the corrupt, the iniquitous, the immoral, the special interests and all on the back of an ever hopeful citizenry.

So, the voices began to speak out—on the radio and in the papers—but no one listened...EXCEPT perhaps the U. S. Congress. In fact, some of those inquisitive voices (Harry?) were proscribed from briefings, meetings and even certain properties! Now I don’t know if all this is mere coincidence or if Congress really has been listening, but it is becoming ever more clear that our officials’ bungling self-interests and nepotistic appointments are eventually going to result in just what so many of us have been warning about in the last two years: federalization! It’s all about an administration that has not only thrown out its initial promise, but has yet to produce a single iota of useful policy; a Legislature that apparently (as yet) couldn’t write a decent piece of significant legislation if it were handed down on stone tablets; an Executive Branch that hasn’t been able to tender a single step toward long term financial recovery.

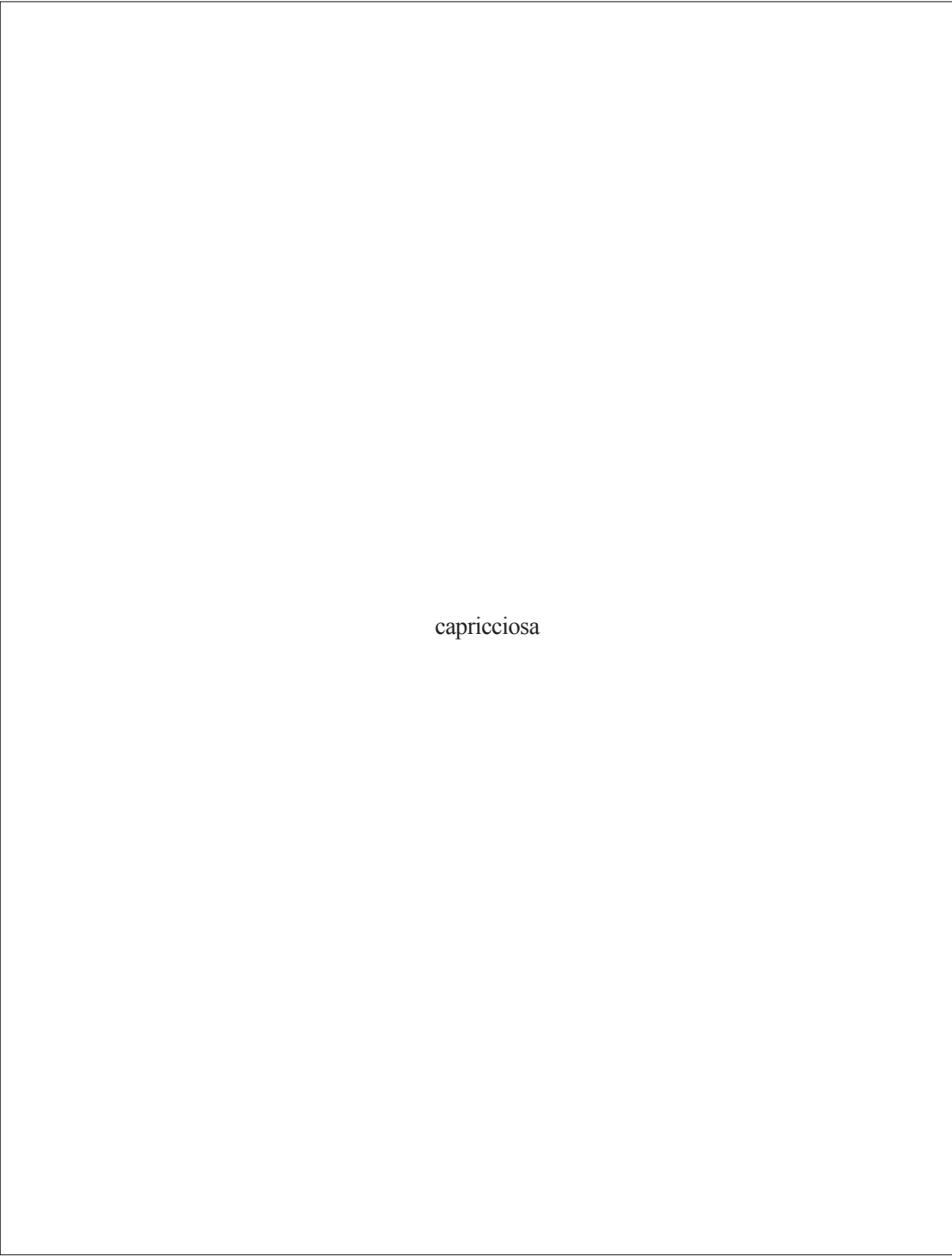
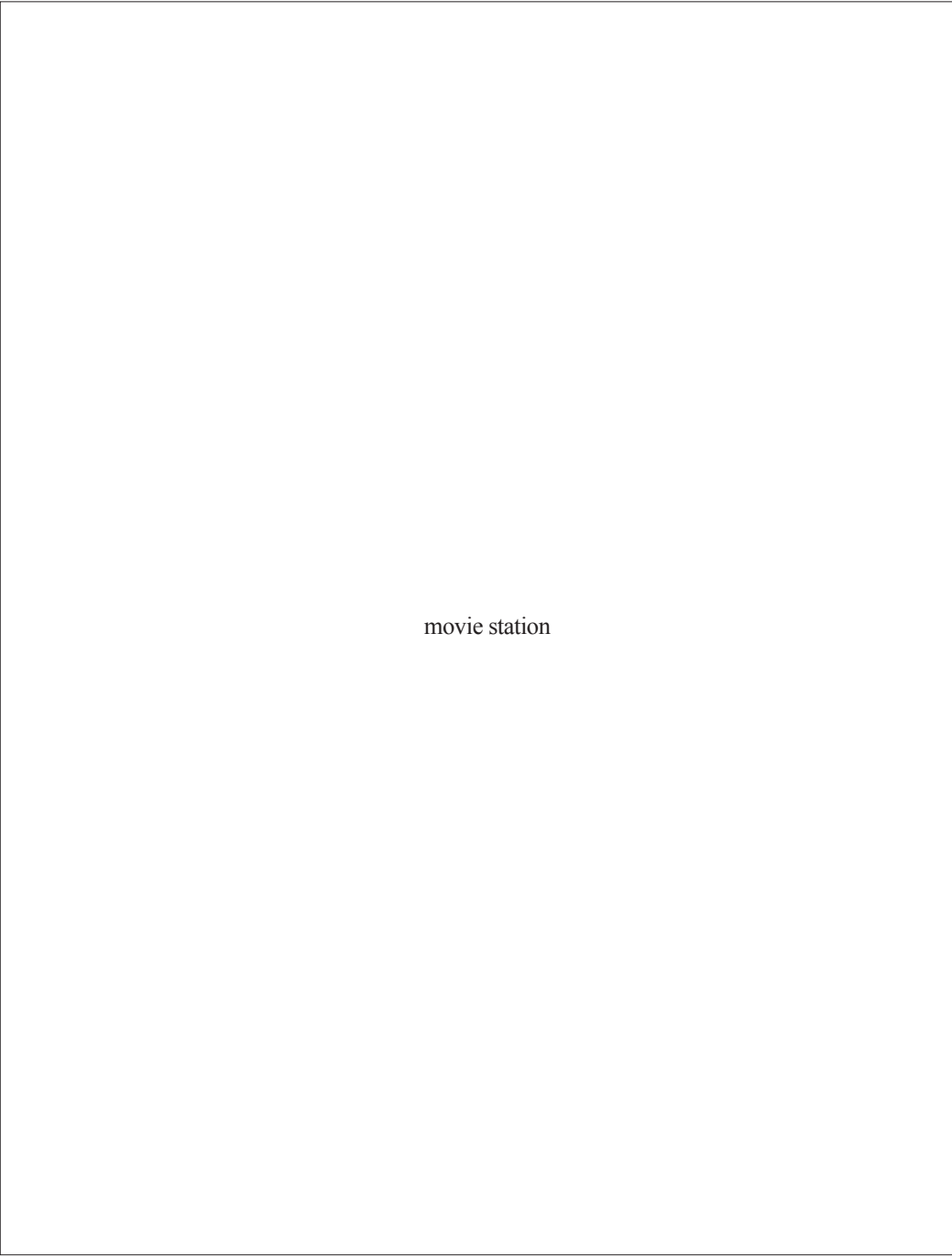
Oh, I almost forgot: Someone wants to float a bond for \$100M and pay off the debt! But in typical fashion, wants to use 20 years of FUTURE promised federal money to pay it back—money that is supposed to benefit the people of the CNMI. So that “new” money won’t be there and not one single thought is being given to how we need to restructure our system to pay for our needs or to prevent the same humongous debt from building again—even faster! A debt that now totals (as if we actually know the real total!) a whopping \$4,000 for every man, woman and child of the CNMI—more than any other per capita national debt anywhere in the world! Now here’s the really scary part: It’s not even owed to somebody else, it’s owed to OURSELVES!

A few weeks ago, the Governor gave us a highly upbeat “State-of-the-CNMI” speech – full of past glory and future promise. But was it really bona fide or only so much claptrap designed to mollify the doubters and disguise the fester? Are the majority of citizens better off today than they were three years ago? Are there any useful proposals from this governor that promise to turn us toward the light? How many times have we seen “his” picture in the local papers? Hundreds, perhaps. And 90 percent of them have been a snapshot made while signing some “proclamation” to declare yet another day, week or month for some special event—and all the while wearing an ear to ear grin under an ever-present mwar-mwar! I’m beginning to wonder just what that “grin” is all about, ‘cause I sure don’t see many of the people around me wearin’ that “grin.”

Well, there is at least ONE promising spot in the CNMI—and I’m not saying this just because I happen to live on Tinian. But, compare some things: Tinian has potable, high grade, pressurized water everywhere it’s needed or wanted 24/7. Do you? Tinian has a non-polluting state-of-the-art power plant and distribution system that puts dependable power everywhere its’ needed or wanted 24/7. Do you? The entire island is in complete compliance (or soon will be) with EVERY single major EPA or DEQ environmental requirement. Are you? The Tinian municipality is able to assist most everyone who needs off-island medical treatment with supplemental transportation and per diem. Can you?

I’m convinced that there are a sufficient number of good, honest, ethical and knowledgeable people here in the CNMI who know what needs to be done and how to do it. Problem is, none of them are in government service and those that are just don’t want to hear anything from those that know! Could the reason be that IF things were done right—ethically, honestly, openly and with reason and thought—it just might contravene the personal power and fortune so vehemently hoarded by some? All those writers and speakers I mentioned in the first paragraph have espoused upon or allegorically tippy-toed through the swamp—and all, including myself, have fallen on deaf ears. Well, maybe it’s time to pay the piper, so to those in power who would cry about the sky falling: Don’t bother, it’s too late. The rest of the upright, honest, hard working, conscientious and ethical people who are left standing will pick up the pieces and go forward while leaving the “Chicken Littles” relegated back to the coop!

Dr. Thomas D. Arkle Jr.
San Jose, Tinian



A grateful NMI remembers

In his World War II memoir Goodbye Darkness, William Manchester noted that most soldiers who fought in the Pacific Theatre didn't know at any one time where they were among the thousands of islands dotting that vast ocean. Many Americans today are equally unfamiliar with the Pacific island chain that has become the newest member of the American political family, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Fewer still know that Marines, soldiers, sailors, and airmen fought a critical World War II battle in these very islands. Some of those men may have hailed from your hometown.

Sixty years ago, flames of artillery fire and clouds of smoke obscured our clear island skies. The whisper of the tropical wind was lost in the thunder of explosions and cries of war. Our blue lagoon ran red with the blood of dying American soldiers. On invasion day, June 15, 1944, the indigenous people of the Northern Marianas were terrified. A mandated territory of Japan at the time, we'd heard stories of these foreign "devils," as the Americans were called.

Only later did we learn that the invading U.S. troops were not foe, but friend. Indeed, they were our liberators from centuries of colonization by Spain, Germany, and Japan and for the first time, we were accorded the framework through which we could decide our own political destiny. In a free election in 1976, citizens of the Northern Mariana Islands voted overwhelmingly to become a commonwealth in political union with the United States of America.

In June of this year, we will dedicate a full week of activities to commemorate the 60th Anniversary Commemoration of the WWII Battles of Saipan and Tinian. We will be honoring returning veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices. We also will be welcoming back Enola Gay pilot Gen. Paul Tibbets (ret.) and his surviving crew, who embarked from Tinian to Hiroshima with the first atomic bomb, Little Boy, (August 6, 1945) and at the American Memorial Park (jointly established by the National Park Service and the Northern Marianas government), we will be dedicating a memorial to the indigenous people of the Northern Marianas who died of war-related causes.

We have come a long way since that fateful day of invasion. While we continue to

preserve and promote our indigenous Chamorro and Carolinian cultures, we also embrace the 21st century wholeheartedly. Our modern-day tourism industry beckons to tourists who answer

the call from Japan, other Asian countries, and beyond.

We invite you during this June's celebration or at any other time of the year to experience the living history of the

Northern Marianas, where our tropical sun is outshone only by the warmth of gratitude in our hearts for those brave service members who helped pave our way to freedom 60 years ago. Our

grateful islands remember.

Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente
Chairman, Committee for Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII

microl spin
+red





A DIFFERENT KIND OF MAKE UP

Volunteers had fake blood and dirt painted onto their faces and bodies in preparation for Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an anti-terror drill involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



WOULD-BE VICTIMS

Volunteers in Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor sit around while waiting for the exercise to start. The exercise involved a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.

LET'S GO CAMPING

A decontamination team sets up the area where "victims" of the mock terror attack will be brought. The exercise, dubbed Operation Safe Harbor, involved a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



FAKE EMERGENCY

A team from the Department of Public Health attends to one of the "victims" in last Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an exercise involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.



PANIC ROOM

A team at the Commonwealth Health Center attends to the "victims" in Wednesday's Operation Safe Harbor, an exercise involving a mock chemical Weapon of Mass Destruction and an explosive attack.

PTC-MARIANAS CUP

Judge Lizama upset with AGO 'absurd' action

By **LIBERTY DONES**
REPORTER

An aghast Superior Court associate judge Juan T. Lizama scolded lawyers of the Attorney General's Office yesterday upon learning that they wrongfully allowed a mother to sit in for a defendant, her minor daughter, during an arraignment four years ago.

"That's absurd! That's improper," said Lizama while conducting a review of the traffic case filed against Endalin Cruz, who is now 19, yesterday afternoon.

"If the AGO [lawyer] is hearing my word, I say, 'You're crazy! It's absurd. It's improper,'" he said.

Lizama also admonished the mother for agreeing to appear on behalf of her daughter.

"You know that you're not the defendant. Why did you do that? You're not supposed to do that. The AGO should not have done that. Even if they told you 'I'll pay you half a million dollars,' don't do it if you know it's wrong," said the judge.

He narrated that he also encountered a similar case yesterday morning with a father coming to the courtroom to settle his son's traffic case.

"The father came to pay. It's absurd to take the father's plea on behalf of the son," he said.

Besides, he said the defendant only needed to pay the fine downstairs since yesterday was the last day for payment.

The judge then turned to Cruz' mother and told her, "Maa'm, next time, don't do that. Don't go to the

court [to sit in] for someone else."

As for the AGO, Lizama said, "Shame on those at the AGO who allowed this... What bothers me is the AGO taking plea for people who is not a defendant."

During the hearing, Lizama learned that the Cruz family had overpaid the court \$225 for bond.

He set the bond yesterday at \$250, and ordered the return of the \$225 excess to defendant.

Meantime, Cruz in an interview said that she knew about her pending bench warrant only last week when she tried to get a police clearance for employment purposes.

"The clearance was held and I had to pay the bond [to be released]," she said.

She said she was being cited for not being qualified to drive and for lack of a seat in the car for children below five years old.

Cruz said that on Dec. 28, 1999, she had to drive the car because her mom was complaining of a bad neck/back problem. "I had to drive because we had to drop food to my sister. My mom was there beside me," she said.

She said police pulled them over when they saw two children below five

years quarreling at the back of the car without car seats.

She said there was a third baby passenger who was younger than the two.

Actually there was a baby car seat but there no belt, she said.

Cruz said she was 15 at that time. She said the police issued her and her mom tickets for their traffic violation.

Since she was a minor, she said that they were told that her mom could just appear in court.

Somare braces for 'no confidence' in PNG

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (The National/PIR)—Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare says he is confident of beating a vote of no confidence that the opposition appears certain to move this week to try to oust him from office.

Somare did not reveal any figures to indicate the strength of his government, but expressed confidently on radio last night that he had the numbers to beat any moves to topple him.

"People will make attempts, but our numbers are there and we are confident. We have 11 political parties (in government) and we know how many people are in the Opposition and how many are in government," he told an NBC radio Talk show last night.

He said he was forced to dump deputy Prime Minister Moses Maladina and the People's National Congress Party from government because there had been rumblings and moves, and people were "creeping to houses to get sup-

port" to topple him, so he had to make the reshuffle after 18 months.

The Prime Minister and Treasurer Bart Philemon were at the talkback show to explain to the listeners the sacking of ministers and the shelving of the section 145 law (proposed constitutional amendment).

He refuted suggestions that he was hungry for power when he decided to extend the prime minister's safe period from 18 to 36 months.

"If I was power hungry, I would have done that in 1982 when I came in with over 50 MPs (Pangu), but I didn't. It is not about staying in power," he said.

He said if people want the mandate to rule, they should get it from the people at the polls and not from the floor of Parliament by luring members of parliament here and there.

In another statement issued earlier, the prime minister said he would not pursue the change to section 145 of the constitution.

He said the original intention of the motion of no confidence (section 145) provision in the constitution was to ensure that a leader of government does not abuse his office and in the process, expose the government and its people to unnecessary hardship. "Unfortunately, we are witnessing again the abuse of the motion of no confidence provision by greedy Members of Parliament who are willing to risk the gains that this government has made to date to make their grab for power," he said.

He said with the 18 months grace period having expired in February 2004, the government has decided to shelve section 145 proposed law and fight moves afoot to remove him.

The Opposition is at present camping in Milne Bay province in a build-up to Thursday, when Parliament will meet to elect PNG's eighth governor general.

It is believed a motion of no confidence will be tabled in Parliament. A two weeks notice is given until the actual vote can take place.

\$118M

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from \$13.3 million to \$14.6 million;

□ garment user fee revenue rose by .75 percent or only about \$150,000 more for this year; and

□ a 7.4 percent decrease in the business gross revenue tax collections, from \$35.6 million posted in October 2002-April 2003 down to \$33.2 million in the first seven months of FY2004.

In the last five months of fiscal year 2004, the CNMI hopes to collect an estimated \$100 million more to reach its fiscal year 2004 budget projection, which is pegged at \$218 million.

Of its revenue sources, the CNMI government hopes to collect \$25.4 million more from the Business Gross Revenue Taxes and \$14.7 million more from the wage and salary tax, and \$15.3 million from corporate and personal income tax. The CNMI government is also pinning its hope on the excise tax where it is hoping to collect \$9 million more for the remaining five months of this fiscal year.

For the garment user fee, the government hopes to receive \$13.1 million in taxes and \$2.9 million from the hotel tax and \$2.2 million from the Liquid Fuel tax.

Of its revenue sources, the DoF noted a decrease in collection from the

BGRT, salary tax, personal and corporate taxes, gaming jackpot tax, hotel tax, liquid fuel tax, and other penalties.

Today, Gov. Juan N. Babauta would meet with the members of the 14th CNMI Legislature to discuss several issues, including the proposed budget allocations of the government for fiscal year 2005.

House spokesperson Charles Reyes said Babauta also briefly narrated to House leaders yesterday his plans and activities for his Washington D.C. trip on Sunday.

Babauta is leaving for Washington to hand-carry the lists of stateless individuals in the CNMI to U.S. Rep. Dan Burton.

CALLAGHAN

From Page 1

which resulted in property damage.

Government prosecutors said Callaghan failed to immediately give his full name, address, the registration number of his car, and failed to exhibit his operator's license and registration card to the person struck or the operator of the other vehicle.

They also alleged that Callaghan failed to immediately stop to notify the operator of the other car.

Further, government prosecutors accused Callaghan of "false reporting."

They alleged that Callaghan unlawfully gave information in both oral and written reports "knowing or having reason to believe that the information is false."

Meantime, chief prosecutor David Hutton in a response letter to Sen. Pete Reyes dated May 25, confirmed that a previous traffic case of Callaghan resulted in "a non-trial disposition."

Callaghan figured in a traffic accident in August 2002, resulting in a judgment and commitment order entered by Judge Lizama.

In Reyes' May 24, 2004 letter to Hutton, he asked as to what kind of plea agreement was reached in the 2002 case, which he said ended up in the dismissal of the "driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs charge."

SENATE

From Page 1

Marianas Visitors Authority from hiring nonresidents.

The DNA bill received eight affirmative votes while Sen. Paul Manglona abstained. On the MVA bill, seven senators voted yes and two abstained—Manglona and Senate President Joaquin Adriano. The two measures essentially became a law after the override.

Last week, Reyes vowed that he would secure votes at the Senate to ensure that an override would be carried out on all his bills that were vetoed by Babauta one after the other.

Reyes slammed the Babauta administration for what he described as

Fiji expects tourism boost from new air service

SUVA, Fiji (Radio Fiji/PIR)—The tourism industry is expected to receive a significant boost when Air Pacific introduces new flights to Canberra, one of Australia's richest and best-educated cities.

The national airline recently announced it would introduce 2-weekly services to Canberra on its BOEING 737-700 aircraft during July and October.

Fiji Visitors Bureau chief executive Bill Gavoka says Canberra has great potential.

Gavoka says the four months that Air Pacific has scheduled the flights are cold months for Canberra but mild for Fiji - and that alone should be a major encouragement for residents of the Australian capital to visit our country.

Gavoka says they are excited about Air Pacific's initiative, adding it is the first step in opening Fiji up to a much wider Australian audience.

"I cannot stress enough my belief that each resident of the Commonwealth, without regard to person or position, is equal before the law," said Reyes.

Hutton said that based on his review, an offer of non-trial disposition by the prosecuting attorney was made to Callaghan's counsel, Joseph Arriola, on or about Aug. 16, 2002.

"That offer was accepted on the same date, and the case was scheduled for a change of plea hearing [before Lizama]," said Hutton.

He said that on Aug. 22, 2002, the defendant's plea of guilty was entered on the basis of the stipulated non-trial disposition. On the same date, Lizama entered a final judgment of conviction, he said.

Notably, Hutton said the transaction occurred during the term of former Attorney General Robert Torres. Torres resigned from his post on Aug. 23, 2002.

Hutton told Reyes that on behalf of the criminal division, "I can assure you that we share your conviction that each resident... is equal before the law."

Reyes earlier urged the Legislature to conduct an oversight hearing on Callaghan's involvement in the accident.

Reyes claimed that Callaghan was given special treatment and that he had fled the scene of the accident without waiting for traffic investigators.

The senator also claimed that Callaghan was not tested for alcohol.

"a personal and irrational" way to get back at him—a three-time veto on all his sponsored bills.

He accused the administration of being vindictive, which he claimed was affecting legitimate measures that could have benefited the CNMI people.

He said that what he found disturbing about all the vetoes was that the administration "did not even take time to make the disapproval convincing enough to justify it."

The administration disapproved all of Reyes' bills because the DNA testing bill reportedly failed to mention funding sources for the test while the MVA would need nonresident workers when the CNMI expands its tourism marketing efforts in China. (*Edith G. Alejandro*)

STATELESS

From Page 1

status after reaching the age of 21 and that those that are already over the age of 21 (and were technically deportable prior to the governor's signing of the Legislation into law) are now lawfully in the CNMI as IRs.

Based on records gathered, there are over 200 stateless individuals in the CNMI but the list continued to decline in recent years. According to Randy Mendoza, some of the stateless children left the island and are now in their parents' homeland, while others are now married.

"The number would not go up but we understand that it would continue to de-

crease as time goes by," said Mendoza.

The list of the House of Representatives showed that there are 142 stateless children, with 125 of them born to Filipino parents and 16 born to Korean ones.

Mendoza said the group is now readying its own website that would detail the activities and actions being done by stateless children in the CNMI. The group also contracted a documentary literary that would be provided to people with interest in their case.

"We are happy that we have support outside the CNMI and we hope that we would soon be achieving our U.S. citizenship," said Mendoza

He added that the group hopes to catch the attention of higher authori-

ties, particularly at the federal and congressional levels.

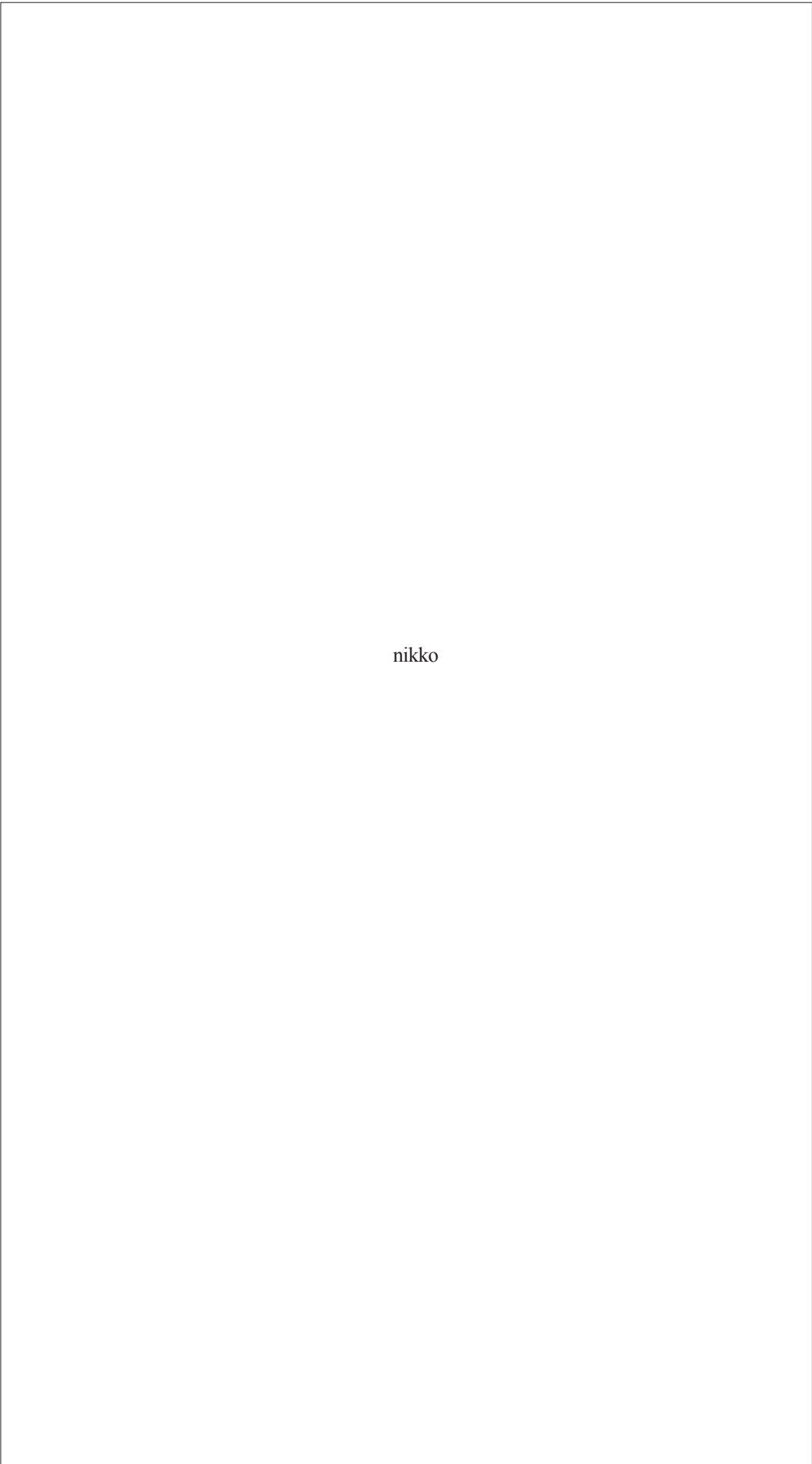
Nevertheless, Mendoza said he is so happy that the 14th CNMI Legislature, particularly Rep. Clyde Norita and House Speaker Ben Fitial, along with Sen. Henry San Nicolas paid attention to their dilemma.

Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed House Bill 14-97 into law yesterday morning. It now goes into the books as PL 11-8.

The governor's next stop is Washington D.C. on Sunday to bring the case to U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, who chairs the U.S. House Committee on Government Reforms' Subcommittee on Wellness and Human Rights. Burton has promised to introduce a bill in Congress to address this matter.



guangdong



nikko

Loca Milestones

62 KES students bid farewell

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

A total of 62 students from Koblerville Elementary School earned promotions to the junior high school educational level yesterday, receiving certificates of completion during the school's end of the year farewell ceremony.

The ceremony kicked off with the presentation of colors and singing of the U.S. and



Ester Paul
Commissioner's Award

CNMI national anthems by the STUCO and the Boy Scouts.

After welcoming remarks in three languages—English, Carolinian, and Chamorro—courtesy of students Genevieve Ngi-raibuuch, Shannah Kaipat, and Ernest Cruz, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente spoke to the graduat-

ing class as keynote speaker. Benavente commended the students for completing grade school, and followed this up by challenging each one to continue to pursue success in life through education.

Following Benavente's remarks, several individual were recognized for their academic efforts, with school officials presenting various awards, including the Presidential Awards for Educational Achievement, Presidential Awards for Educational Excellence, subject awards, and Top Five awards.

It was only fitting that Ester Paul, the student posting the highest Grade Point Average from fourth to sixth grade, was honored and recognized; she was named the recipient of the Commissioner's Award.

Paul made a brief appearance at the podium, extending her appreciation to her parents, teachers, KES staff and administrators, and fellow classmates.

Acting principal Happy Miller then closed the ceremony by congratulating the students for their achievements and noting her desire that they display the skills they had learned at the school once they enter junior high level.

Prior to closing their school year, the students had final walk around the campus. They, along with parents, guest, and staff, had lunch in the school cafeteria.



SHAN SEMAN
Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente presents Keoki Tudela with his certificate of completion during the farewell ceremony yesterday.



SHAN SEMAN
The Koblerville Elementary School sixth grade students listen attentively to the remarks during their farewell ceremony yesterday at the school grounds.



SHAN SEMAN
Tony Rogolifoi Jr., second from right, poses for a souvenir shot with from left, father Tony Rogolifoi, Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente, and brother Peter.



SHAN SEMAN
The sixth grade students take their final walk around the school campus at the conclusion of yesterday's ceremony.

DAIICHI

Recognized for their academic achievement were the five graduates with the highest GPA of their class: Mary Cris Waing, Jessilyn Dris, Ashley Castro, Cassandra Marquez, and Laura Ramos.

CASSIE FEJERAN



Cheska Salen
Principal's Award



Bernadette Laviste
Commissioner's Award

Garapan graduates 112 students

By CASSIE DLG FEJERAN
REPORTER

Garapan Elementary School held its graduation ceremony last night with teachers Marsha Owens and Beatrice Tualatai opening the floor to welcome family, relatives, and guests.

Pastor Alexis Lorzano led the invocation just before the opening remarks from the school's Principal, Yvonne R. Gomez. Following her remarks was the commissioner of education, Dr. Rita H. Inos.

Ashley Castro, STUCO president, marched up on stage to introduce the keynote speaker of the night, Brenda Schultz. Schultz was recognized as the

CNMI teacher of the year. She left the 112 graduating students with memories and advice for the challenges they will soon be facing.

Larra Ramos and Rotessa Sumpay led the graduates in their ceremonial song I Believe by Yoland Adams. Adding on to the students' performance was a special number that was composed and performed by two graduates, Tharanton Masayos and Troy Santos, who took the audience by surprise with a rap song I'm Gonna Miss This School, accompanied by the ukulele.

The most outstanding Mallard Award was presented to students who had been the most outstanding in their class.

Tricia Laborce, Peter Sablan, Antonette Cabrera, and Jesselyn Dris were a few of the graduates who received this award. The subject award, Presidential Academics award, recognition awards, and the Presidential Improvement awards were also presented to the students.

Recognized for their academic achievement were the five graduates with the highest GPA of their class: Mary Cris Waing, Jessilyn Dris, Ashley Castro, Cassandra Marquez, and Laura Ramos. The girls stood on stage to help welcome the top two graduates receiving the highest awards. The Principal's award was presented to Cheska Salen, while Bernadette Laviste was granted the

Commissioner's award and the Science subject award.

Closing the ceremony with his gratitude and appreciation to the 6th grade teachers and graduates was vice principal Rachael Teregeyo.



Brenda Schultz, the CNMI teacher of the year for 2003, speaks to the 112 graduating students.

CASSIE FEJERAN

Garapan Elementary School students listen to the speakers during their graduation ceremony.

CASSIE FEJERAN

39 SAES students ready for first grade

By SHAN SEMAN
REPORTER

Some 39 kindergarten students will soon be part of the San Antonio Elementary School first grade lineup next school year after a promotion ceremony at the school grounds yesterday morning.

With parents, family members, and teachers witnessing the event, the students put on a show to remember them by, successfully performing several numbers including the Ocho Ocho and Pamela dances, which drew heavy applause from all directions.

The group also sang I'm Going to My Graduation and Busy Days.

The kindergarten cast also performed a special number that featured greetings in various languages, including Carolinian, Chamorro, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Tagalog, and Bangladeshi.

The students were also presented with awards that marked their official farewell to the kindergarten level. They were all commended for their efforts throughout the school year.

The two teachers responsible for the students were Chibora Wasisang and Lorraine Babauta.



Kindergarten students perform a musical number during the promotion ceremony yesterday.

SHAN SEMAN



SHAN SEMAN

There was no hiding of excitement among the San Antonio Kindergarten students as they awaited the start of their promotion ceremony yesterday at the school.



San Antonio Kindergarten students recite a Chinese greeting.

SHAN SEMAN

San Antonio Kindergarten student Mikayla Duenas recites a Carolinian greeting to the audience.



Michelle Fujihira
Commissioner's Award

Elsiana Taitano
Principal's Award

CORRECTION

The captions that came out with this picture yesterday inadvertently switched the two. It should have read this way. Our apologies.

nilas
cnyk

Business

SUBWAY® SUPPORTS WORKERS

Subway® Restaurants Saipan is a proud supporter of the Garapan Revitalization Plan that is close to final stages. This week, workers began the finishing touches on the foundation of the area around the Subway® Restaurant in Garapan. During their work, Subway® Sandwich Artists provided the workers with refreshments and snacks to thank them for their work in ensuring the surrounding businesses access and coordination.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



mazda
cmyk

Consumer confidence barely budes in May

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP BUSINESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Consumer confidence barely budged in May as an improving employment outlook offset worries about rising gasoline prices and heightened political uncertainty overseas, the Conference Board reported Tuesday.

Still, the report's conflicting results from consumers about jobs made some economists worry that they could pull back on spending if the climate deteriorates.

"Confidence is holding up, but there is also a recognition that the foundation isn't as strong as one might think," said Joel L. Naroff, president and chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pa.

In a separate report, home buyers, scrambling to seal a deal before mortgage rates move higher, propelled sales of previously owned homes in April to the second-best month on record.

The Consumer Confidence Index edged up to 93.2 from a revised 93.0 reading in April, the New York-based group said. The latest reading was slightly below the 94 figure that analysts had expected.

Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board's consumer research center, said that strong employment gains in March and April were helping boost consumers' evaluation of current conditions.

"This has made consumers more positive about short-term prospects in the months ahead," she said in a statement. "The pickup in the job market is offsetting the impact of rising gas prices and escalating tensions overseas."

Economists closely track consumer confidence because consumer spending accounts for two-thirds of U.S. economic activity.

Consumers are being hit with conflicting news. On one hand, they're seeing a broader-based job recovery, but they are also facing higher gasoline prices, higher interest rates and disquieting news from Iraq.

That has translated to mixed signals from consumers in the confidence report. For example,

while the number of consumers reported that jobs are plentiful was on the rise, the number of respondents citing that jobs are hard to get increased as well.

"Consumers are facing the issues in the world and dealing with them," said Naroff. "But the problem is they are dealing with them by some people feeling more comfortable and others feeling less comfortable. It is not clear that the people that keep saying things are better will continue to say that."

And Naroff said if worries continue, consumers may cut back their spending.

"Consumer confidence is at a level that is consistent with modest economic growth," said Mark Vitner, senior economist at Wachovia Corp. And he said what will keep the index in the mid 90's is the mixed job picture.

"We are adding more jobs, but there are still significant pockets of the country that are not seeing improvements," he said. For certain labor-intensive industries, including textiles, those jobs won't be coming back, he said.

Still, on the bright side, Vitner expects that the economy will add a total of 2.5 million jobs this year, which he believes will have three times the economic impact of higher gasoline prices, assuming they remain at the same level.

The Labor Department is set to release its job figures on June 4. Analysts expect the unemployment rate to remain at 5.6 percent. But they are counting on nonfarm payrolls—government and private employers—to add 215,000 jobs.

Tuesday's report said that consumers continue to rate current conditions as favorable. Those saying business conditions have improved rose to 22.3 percent in May, up from 21.7 percent the previous month. Those claiming conditions have worsened remained unchanged at 21.7 percent. Consumers claiming jobs are "hard to get" rose to 30.6 percent from 28.0. Those saying jobs are "plentiful," however, also increased to 16.6 percent from 15.6 percent.

FSM to allow European fishing boats

MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia/PIR)—The Federated States of Micronesia has struck a deal with the European Union to allow six European purse-seiners and twelve European long-line fishing vessels to catch tuna in the FSM's waters.

This is the third fisheries agreement the European Union has concluded with Pacific Island countries.

Earlier agreements have allowed some of the European fleet to relocate to the central

Western Pacific to fish for tuna in the waters of Kiribati and Solomon Islands.

The latest deal with the Federated States of Micronesia will allow six European vessels to catch up to 8,600 tons of tuna a year in the FSM's exclusive economic zone.

The payment to the FSM for the rights to that catch will amount to about EU560,000 (US\$672,000).

The agreement is expected to take effect from January the first next year.

Guam water commission votes to privatize service

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—Consolidated Commission on Utilities members voted last night to fully privatize the Guam Waterworks Authority operation.

Last week, CCU members and representatives from the off-island engineering firm Black & Veatch Corp. and international utility privatization specialists Hunton & Williams met to discuss options to privatize the water agency.

The consultants presented the commission with six privatization options. Commissioners whittled that down to two, and after several hours during its weekly meeting last night, chose to privatize the water agency through a concession agreement. In a concession agreement, a private company would operate the utility, come up with its own funding for projects and the public utility’s employees would become private-sector employees.

Putting a contractor in place will take at least 18 months, the commission and its consultants have said.

Commissioner Vince Camacho said the concession agreement would outlast the elected

commission, insulate the operation of the utility from political interference, provide lower rates over time, and result in a faster application of technology to make improvements.

Vince Camacho referred to a management services contract as one where “there’s too many hands in the cookie jar.”

Commissioner Judith Guthertz made a motion to support a management services contract, but fellow members didn’t support it. Guthertz then joined the other commissioners in voting unanimously for a concession agreement.

Earlier in the meeting, Guthertz said she wanted the commission to keep GWA as an operator, so long as the water agency continues fixing the island’s water and wastewater problems.

Vince Camacho disagreed with Guthertz’s proposal.

“We need to put a line in the sand and say there is no more. The people of Guam deserve more than: ‘We will look into that,’” he said.

Commissioner Frank Shimizu said the commission wouldn’t commit the government to a “bad deal.”

Commissioners also dis-

cussed how GWA employees would be affected. Under concession, the contractor would run the utility with its own work force.

CCU members discussed employee options, such as early retirement, severance packages and the possibility of giving employees right of first refusal, so the private contractor can absorb them if they qualify.

CCU Chairman Simon Sanchez said the commission wanted to ensure that long after he and other CCU members end their terms, the people of Guam would be able to receive clean water and reliable service.

CCU Commissioner Ben Palomo added: “The (GWA) employees were so anxious to make the system work, but they weren’t provided with the tools or the training. I think we all see that the employees could make the system work, but past leaders have failed them.”

With the method of privatization now selected, it will take at least six months for the agency and its consultants to do a survey of the island’s water and sewer system to present an accurate picture of the island’s infrastructure.

mva
cmyk

First PMA plane to reach Palau in June

KOROR, Palau (PDN/PIR)—Palau Micronesia Air has announced June 20 as the arrival date for its first aircraft, a Boeing 737-300.

The fledgling airline has seen several dates for the plane’s arrival and the commencement of flights come and go. But now PMA is offering photos of the plane -- complete with the painted logo on its tail fin -- to build confidence and excitement for the start of the island-owned, regional airline.

Airline executives have said that the airline will start flying in July.

The leased plane is in Christchurch, New Zealand, where Air New Zealand is doing the maintenance inspection and certification checks on the aircraft, a PMA press release said. As part of the preparation process, the plane also has received its livery, the exterior identification for the aircraft that includes the airline name and logo.

The logo incorporates the traditional symbol of the rising moon found on the Republic of Palau’s flag and also four stars that represent each state in the Federated States of Micronesia set against a blue background, the release said.

“The flag of the Republic of

Palau and the logo of Palau Micronesia Air signify our emergence, Palau and Micronesia, as independent and sovereign nations,” said Alan Seid, PMA president.

With its first plane, PMA plans to fly four flights per week to Guam, and two flights per week to the neighboring islands of Yap, Chuuk and Pohnpei. PMA also plans to use that plane for one flight per week direct from Palau to Saipan, three flights to Manila and two weekly flights to Darwin, in northern Australia.

The second plane set to arrive later this year would commence direct flights from Palau to Japan.

PMA has signed an agreement with Auckland-based Airwork Flight Operations to fly and maintain its planes, Seid said.

Airwork is one of New Zealand’s oldest aviation companies, starting in 1936. In addition to general aviation services, Airwork operates charters flights under its brand name Skylink and has a joint venture cargo operation with New Zealand Post.

Seid said in April that the airline expects to offer rates 10 to 20 percent lower than Continental Airlines, the only regional operator in Micronesia today.

verizon
cmyk

Exxon Mobil denies gouging motorists

By DAVID KOENIG
AP BUSINESS WRITER

DALLAS (AP)—The chief executive of oil giant Exxon Mobil Corp. said Wednesday that the high price of gasoline is out of his company’s hands and that political uncertainty in the Middle East will roil prices for the next several months.

Lee R. Raymond said Exxon Mobil—which earned \$21.5 billion last year—makes about a nickel per gallon of gasoline at the pump.

“This notion that we’re making dollars on gasoline; that’s a long way from true,” Raymond said. “The two largest elements in the price of gasoline are the cost of crude oil and taxes. We’re way down the list.”

Raymond made the comments

to reporters after Exxon Mobil’s annual shareholder meeting in the Dallas symphony hall.

Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest oil producer, said last week that it would increase output of crude oil beginning next month, but other OPEC members have declined to publicly support an 8.5 percent increase in production quotas, and prices crept up again.

Raymond disputed the idea that Saudi Arabia has lost control over oil pricing. He also said there is adequate supply of crude oil for refineries around the world.

Raymond said crude prices were being pushed higher by uncertainty over the political situation in the Middle East “and the high price of gasoline in this country pulls the crude

price along with it.”

Demand for gasoline has increased in the United States, but refinery capacity has grown slowly in recent decades. Raymond said long-term profit margins in refining still don’t look attractive enough to encourage new construction.

Asked where gasoline prices are headed over the next six months, Raymond answered: “Up and down. You tell me what’s going to happen in the Middle East and I’ll give you an answer.”

Earlier in the day, Exxon Mobil shareholders overwhelmingly defeated a series of resolutions.

One backed by environmental groups would have required the board of directors to defend the company’s position that global warming from fuel emissions



Raymond

hasn’t been proven. They said Exxon Mobil will suffer financially if governments around the world place tighter regulations on greenhouse gas emissions.

Irving, Texas-based Exxon

US eyeing ways to boost gas supplies

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Bush administration is considering easing environmental requirements for a multitude of gasoline blends and streamlining permits for new refineries to increase fuel supplies and fight soaring prices, Commerce Secretary Donald Evans said Wednesday.

Evans, a former Texas oil company executive, said in an Associated Press interview that the cost of gasoline, which hit a record national average of \$2.06 per gallon this week, was affecting driving habits, with people making fewer trips to the store.

Mindful that oil shocks in the 1970s and 1980s were severe enough to push the country into a series of recessions, Evans said the administration was taking very seriously the current run-up in prices and the impact it might have on consumer’s buying patterns.

“It is of great concern to us,” Evans told the AP. “The president will take all the steps we can to deal with the problem.”

A CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll on Wednesday indicated that almost six in 10 people surveyed said they expected gasoline prices would cause them a financial hardship this summer and lead them to drive less.

The administration is feeling political heat as well from the surge in energy prices. Democratic presidential challenger John Kerry, blaming Bush’s foreign policy, said Wednesday that “instability and danger in the Middle East are driving up the price of oil.”

On a campaign swing in Oregon and Washington states, Kerry said people are paying more for gasoline because the administration did not pressure the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to lower prices by producing more oil.

Evans said the administration was exploring ways to reduce the requirements that now exist for gasoline blends in different parts of the coun-

try to deal with specific air pollution problems.

“We’ve got to think real hard whether we need 17, 18, 19, 20, whatever it is, different varieties of fuel in this country,” Evans said. “That puts certain areas of the country at a very high risk of being dependent on a single source supplier.”

Evans said the need for these “boutique fuels” was hurting the country’s ability to import gasoline. While there is surplus capacity at refineries worldwide, foreign refiners often do not produce the specialty blends required only in America.

But Vickie Patton, a senior lawyer with Environmental Defense in Boulder, Colo., said that the use of cleaner-burning gasoline blends had been “consistently one of the single most effective measures to protect public health and the environment from harmful air pollution.”

Evans also suggested looking “at the regulations and permitting processes as to expanding and building our own refineries here in America.” He said a new refinery had not been built in this country in more than 25 years.

Evans is the second Cabinet member to raise the issue of the numerous gasoline blends that are required to meet environmental standards.

Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham, testifying before a House panel last month, said the administration was seriously considering requests from California and New York to waive requirements that they sell specially blended gasoline. The requirements for the special blends of gasoline make fuel more expensive.

EPA spokesman John Milette said the agency has not indicated when it might make a decision.

Evans also noted that Bush’s energy bill was still tied up in Congress. Many Democrats are opposed to a proposal that would open an Alaskan wildlife refuge to oil drilling.

Mobil is coming off a record year, having earned \$21.5 billion last year.

Raymond boasted that the company has earned \$74 billion in the last five years, equal to the profits of nearly 400 companies in the Standard & Poor’s 500 Index.

Shareholder Brent Fryer of St. George, Utah, complained however that investors’ return on Exxon Mobil stock has been much lower than other oil companies such as ConocoPhillips.

The meeting served as something of a debut for new president Rex Tillerson, widely considered to be Raymond’s heir apparent. Tillerson read a speech about the company’s operations, but Raymond ran the 3-hour meeting, as he has each year for a decade.

Asked when he might retire, the 65-year-old Raymond said he would do so “eventually.”

Exxon Mobil shares had fallen 37 cents, to \$43.45, in afternoon trading on the New York Stock Exchange.

boh
cmyk

Orders for big-ticket goods fall in April

By JEANNINE AVERSA
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—Orders to factories for big-ticket goods fell sharply in April after a strong gain in the previous month, reflecting the sometimes bumpy recovery by manufacturers.

The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that orders for “durables”—costly manufactured goods expected to last at least three years—dropped by 2.9 percent last month. It was the biggest decline since September 2002.

April’s slackening in demand for big-ticket goods came after sizable gains in February and

March, where orders went up by 3.9 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively.

In other economic news, new-home sales fell by 11.8 percent in April from the month before to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.09 million units, the lowest level since November, the department said in a second report.

The decline, which followed a 9.7 percent jump in March that left sales at a record high pace of 1.24 million units, came as mortgage rates climbed. The average rate on a 30-year mortgage in April was 5.83 percent, compared with 5.45 percent in March.

David Seiders, chief econo-

mist at the National Association of Home Builders, did not see the drop in April’s sales, the biggest in 10 years, as worrisome. Looking ahead, he believes that an improved job climate should help offset the impact of higher mortgage rates, making for healthy housing activity this year.

In financial markets, the Dow Jones industrials lost 7.73 points to close at 10,109.89.

On the manufacturing front, economists were predicting a drop in big-ticket orders for April given the robust demand in March, but they were forecasting a smaller, 0.8 percent decline.

While the larger than

expected drop was disappointing, it was viewed as temporary rather than a harbinger of an unraveling of manufacturing’s recovery.

“Manufacturing is recovering well, and I fully expect that to continue for many months,” said economist Ken Mayland, president of ClearView Economics. Even with the drop in April, orders for big-ticket goods are up an impressive 12.4 percent from a year ago, he pointed out.

Other recent reports, including one released by the Federal Reserve this month, suggested that manufacturing activity was healthy in April.

Gas prices don’t seem to bother car sales

DETROIT (AP)—Heavy discounting of new cars and trucks appears to be offsetting concerns about rising gasoline prices, even when it comes to the sale of big pickups and sport utility vehicles, analysts and auto executives say.

“We haven’t seen any statistically relevant changes of volumes ... within a car line or between the different styles,” Chrysler Group chief executive Dieter Zetsche said Wednesday evening at an exhibit opening at the Walter P. Chrysler Museum in Auburn Hills.

“Obviously we’re watching that carefully,” he added, noting that Chrysler’s May sales are faring well.

Goldman Sachs analyst Gary Lapidus predicts new vehicle sales in May to be up 5 percent from a year ago, despite gas prices that are a half-dollar-a-gallon more than this time last year. Other analysts are forecasting sales to be up 1 percent to 5 percent, giving a

kick to what’s been a somewhat sluggish sales year so far. Major automakers report May sales results Wednesday.

“We see little evidence that high gasoline prices are deterring light truck buyers,” Lapidus said in a research note Wednesday.

Several dealers around the country say shoppers often mention fuel prices, and some customers have chosen smaller models with better fuel efficiency, but most still seem unfazed by prices at the pump.

Still, sales of fuel-efficient gas-electric hybrids continue to rise. Toyota’s U.S. arm reported its eighth consecutive best-ever April sales tally last month, helped in part by strong demand for its hybrid Prius sedan. Honda, the only other automaker currently selling a hybrid vehicle on the U.S. retail market, said its Civic hybrid posted a second consecutive month of record sales in April.

Many dealers have waiting lists for the Prius and Civic hybrids.

Previously owned home sales up in April

WASHINGTON (AP)—Scrambling to lock in a deal before mortgage rates move higher, buyers propelled sales of previously owned homes in April to the second-best month on record.

The National Association of Realtors reported Tuesday that sales of existing homes clocked in at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 6.64 million last month, representing a 2.5 percent increase over March.

The pace of April’s sales was second only to the all-time monthly high rate of 6.68 million in September 2003.

April’s performance surpassed economists’ expectations. They were forecasting sales to dip to a rate of around 6.45 million.

The strong showing comes even as mortgage rates have been climbing in anticipation of an interest rate increase by the Federal Reserve. Economists

believe the Fed could order its first rate increase in more than four years next month.

The average rate on a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage was 5.83 percent in April, up from 5.45 percent in March. Although rates on 30-year mortgages dropped last week to 6.30 percent after an eight-week rise, Lereah predicts rates will creep up to 6.6 percent by the end of the year.

“Part of what we’re seeing now is fence-jumping from people wanting to buy a home before interest rates move higher,” said David Lereah, the association’s chief economist.

Higher mortgage rates should start to slow homes sales around June, Lereah said. Even if that turns out to be the case, he and other economists predict sales for all of 2004 will be close to the record high levels posted in 2003.

micropac

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dial rent

Nation

7 al-Qaida suspects sought in attack plan

By CURT ANDERSON
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—America’s top law enforcement officials urged the public Wednesday to help the FBI track down seven suspected al-Qaida operatives and avert an attack on U.S. soil that a stream of credible intelligence indicates could occur in the summer.

Attorney General John Ashcroft said the “disturbing” intelligence, collected for months, augments al-Qaida’s own declaration that its plans for a devastating follow-up to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks are 90 percent complete. Ashcroft said that could mean terrorists already are in the United States to execute the plan, though he acknowledged there is no new information indicating when, where or how an attack might happen.

“Credible intelligence from multiple sources indicates that al-Qaida plans to attempt an attack on the United States in the next few months,” Ashcroft said at a news conference with FBI Director Robert Mueller.

Ashcroft and Mueller announced an intensified level of counterterrorism activity for the summer. This includes interviews with individuals who could provide intelligence about terrorism, creation of a new FBI task force to focus on the threat and an appeal to all Americans to be extra vigilant about their surroundings, their neighbors and any suspicious activity.

There was no immediate plan to raise the nation’s terror threat level. Asa Hutchinson, Homeland Security Department undersecretary for border and transportation security, said, “We don’t have the specific information that would justify raising it or would cause us to do it.”

Some Democrats charged that the administration was needlessly scaring people, perhaps to divert attention from the continuing problems in Iraq.

Ashcroft rejected talk of a political motive, saying greater public vigilance could help head off an attack.

“My job isn’t to worry about whether someone will be second-guessing,” he said.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan also denied there was a political aspect to the threat report.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, notable by his absence from the Ashcroft and Mueller news conference, indicated on NBC’s “Today” show that there was some dissent over whether to raise the threat level from yellow, mid-point on the five-color scale, to orange.

“There’s not a consensus within the administration that we need to raise the threat level,” he said. However, later in the day, he echoed Ashcroft in saying all key officials are in agreement about the terror threat.

Six of the al-Qaida operatives, including two Canadian citizens, whose photos and backgrounds were highlighted

Wednesday have been the subject of FBI pursuit for months. The seventh, 25-year-old Adam Yahye Gadahn, is a U.S. citizen who grew up on a California goat farm and converted to Islam as a teenager. He was described by Mueller as having attended al-Qaida training camps in Afghanistan and served as an al-Qaida translator.

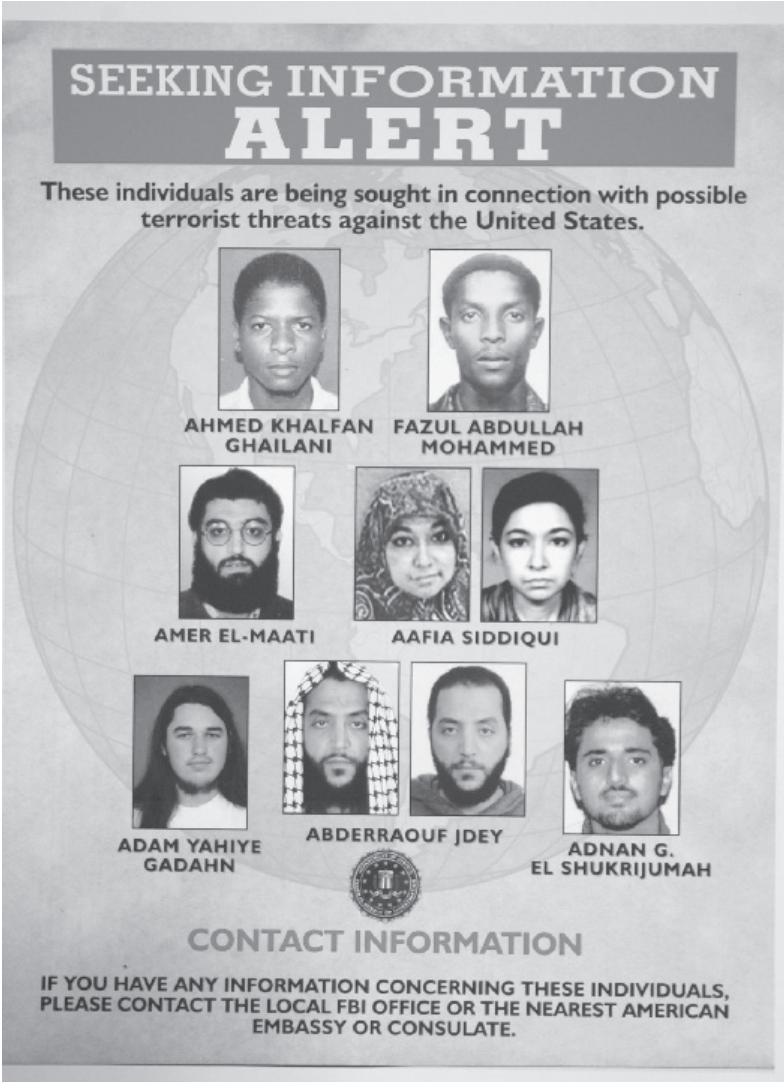
Each of the suspects, Ashcroft said, presents “a clear and present danger” to the United States because of their language skills, familiarity with U.S. culture and ability to travel under multiple aliases and use forged documents.

Ashcroft said that al-Qaida has made adjustments to its tactics to escape easy detection, such as having operatives travel with their families to lower their profiles and recruiting people who can pass for having European ethnicity rather than Middle Eastern backgrounds, as all of the 19 Sept. 11 hijackers did.

“Al-Qaida is a resilient and adaptable organization, known for altering tactics in the face of new security measures,” Ashcroft said.

A poster of individuals sought in connection with possible terrorist threats against the United States is seen before a news conference by FBI Director Robert Mueller and Attorney General John Ashcroft at FBI Headquarters Wednesday, May 26, 2004 in Washington.

AP



dial rent

US has so far provided \$191B for wars

By ALAN FRAM
AP WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Bush and Congress have so far provided \$191 billion for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and defensive military operations at home, and about two-thirds of the money has been spent or is owed, White House figures show.

The numbers show that since the Sept. 11 attacks, lawmakers have provided \$61 billion for U.S. military and reconstruction activity in Afghanistan, \$119 billion for operations in Iraq, \$10 billion for domestic military steps and \$1 billion for other expenses such as rebuilding the damaged Pentagon.

Congress has enacted at least five bills providing money for the wars, covering the 2001 through 2004 government budget years. At each step, figures on the expenditures have been reported.

But the numbers provided this week by the White House Office of Management and Budget represent the most comprehensive look at war spending that the administration has made available.

“The president has been very clear ... he will do what it takes to win the war on terror, and the war in Iraq is, as he’s put it, the central front in the war on terror,” Joel Kaplan, deputy director of the budget office, said in

an interview this week.

Congress overwhelmingly has supported the war money, though it has opposed—with some success—administration attempts to control the funds with little input from lawmakers. But as the fighting in Iraq has dragged on, some lawmakers have challenged whether that operation is proceeding wisely.

“If you need to spend money to defend the country, you better doggone well do it,” Rep. David Obey of Wisconsin, a high-ranking Democrat, said in a recent interview. “But the idea we’re reducing the terrorist threat with what we’re doing in Iraq is preposterous.”

Taken together, the \$191 billion is more than double the \$84 billion, in today’s dollars, that the country spent for the 1991 Persian Gulf War. American taxpayers had to bear only \$4.7 billion of that amount because of contributions and repayments by allied nations.

The figures exclude the \$25 billion Bush requested this month for next year’s operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Administration officials have acknowledged that ultimately, his total request for 2005 will probably top \$50 billion.

So far, legislators have provided \$165 billion for military action. That is in addition to the

annual budget the Pentagon receives for its other costs, which have grown rapidly under Bush and this year should exceed \$400 billion.

An additional \$25 billion has been for reconstruction activities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

About 59 percent of the military funds and 85 percent of the rebuilding dollars have been for Iraq.

The figures show that through May 17, \$123 billion, or 75 percent, of the military funds have been spent or committed to contracts.

About \$9 billion, or 36 percent, of the reconstruction money has been spent or committed. Those expenditures have been slower because they are often for long-range projects such as building power stations, and because of security problems in both countries that have hampered work.

The domestic military expenditures are for combat aircraft patrols over U.S. cities and using reserves for strengthened security at domestic military bases.

The numbers exclude federal spending for domestic security, such as the new Department of Homeland Security. Such spending, which was \$21 billion in 2001, hit \$41 billion this year and Bush has requested \$47 billion for 2005, according to a study last month by the Congressional Budget Office.



U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Julius Wright, of Long Beach, CA, secures the perimeter during a city council meeting in in Nasar Wa Salam, near Fallujah, Iraq, Tuesday, May 25, 2004.

AP

Gore says Rumsfeld, Rice and Tenet should resign

NEW YORK (AP)—Al Gore delivered a blistering denunciation Wednesday of the Bush administration’s “twisted values and atrocious policies” in Iraq and demanded the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice and CIA director George Tenet.

Raising his voice to a yell in a speech at New York University, Gore said: “How dare they subject us to such dishonor and disgrace! How dare they drag the good name of the United States of America through the mud of Saddam Hussein’s torture prison!”

The Democratic former vice president said the situation in Iraq is spinning out of control.

“I am calling today for Republicans as well as Democrats to join me in asking for the immediate resignations of those immediately below George Bush and Dick Cheney, who are most responsible for creating the catastrophe we are facing in Iraq,” Gore said, drawing strong applause from the partisan crowd.

“Donald Rumsfeld ought to resign immediately!” Gore bellowed. “Our nation is at risk every single day Rumsfeld remains as secretary of defense. We need someone

with good judgment and common sense.”

Rice “ought to resign immediately. She has badly mishandled the coordination of national security policy. This is a disaster for our country,” he said.

“It came from twisted values and atrocious policies at the highest levels of our government,” he said.

The former presidential candidate was gentler on Tenet, a Clinton administration appointee, describing him as a friend and “honorable man” who should still leave his position for intelligence failures.

The Republican National Committee shot back at Gore, pointing out that while he was vice president terrorists attacked U.S. embassies in Africa, bombed the USS Cole and carried out the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

“Al Gore’s attacks on the president today demonstrate that he either does not understand the threat of global terror or he has amnesia,” RNC spokesman Jim Dyke said in a statement.

Gore also argued that the abuse of Iraqi inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison was not the result of “a few bad apples” but “the natural consequence of the Bush administration policy.”

carrier

Nichols convicted of state murder charges

McALESTER, Okla. (AP)— Nearly a decade after the Oklahoma City bombing, Terry Nichols was found guilty of 161 state murder charges Wednesday for helping carry out what was then the deadliest terrorist attack on American soil. He could get the death sentence he escaped when he was convicted in federal court in the 1990s.

The verdicts came just five hours after the jury began deliberations. Nichols was stone-faced and stared straight ahead at the judge as the verdicts were read, while his attorneys bowed their heads and clenched their hands together.

A juror wiped tears from her eyes as the conviction was announced and several others appeared to have been crying. Prosecutors beamed, and family members hugged and congratulated them.

“I’m just so thrilled for these families,” said a tearful Diane Leonard, whose husband died in the bombing. “After nine years, the families who lost loved ones finally have justice.”

Oklahoma prosecutors brought the case with the goal of finally

winning a death sentence against Nichols, who is serving a life term on federal charges in the 1995 bombing. The same 12-member jury will now determine Nichols’ fate on the state charges: life in prison or death by injection. The penalty phase will begin Tuesday and is expected to last about three weeks.

Prosecutors contended Nichols worked hand in hand with former Army buddy Timothy McVeigh to acquire the ingredients and build the fuel-and-fertilizer bomb in a twisted plot to avenge the government siege in Waco, Texas, that left about 80 people dead exactly two years earlier.

The April 19, 1995, blast at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building killed 168 people. McVeigh was executed in June 2001, and until now was the only person convicted of murder in the bombing.

Nichols was convicted in federal court in 1997 of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter in the deaths of eight law officers. Oklahoma prosecutors

later charged Nichols with the deaths of the 160 other victims and one victim’s fetus. Nichols also was found guilty of first-degree arson and conspiracy.

“He’s responsible for everything. We’ll take care of him one way or another,” said Doris Delman, who lost her daughter, Terry Rees, in the bombing.

Prosecutors brought a mountain of circumstantial evidence during a two-month trial that included testimony from about 250 witnesses. They said Nichols bought the explosive ammonium nitrate fertilizer used in the bombing and stole detonation cord, blasting caps and other explosives.

The defense contended that others helped McVeigh carry out the bombing and that Nichols was the fall guy for a wider conspiracy. Witnesses testified that they saw McVeigh with others, including a stocky, dark-haired man depicted in an FBI sketch and known only as John Doe No. 2, in the weeks before the bombing. Authorities later concluded

that the mystery man was actually an Army private who had nothing to do with the bombing.

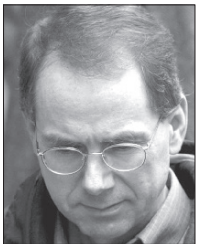
“This is a case about manipulation, betrayal and overreaching,” defense attorney Barbara Bergman said in closing arguments. “People who are still unknown assisted Timothy McVeigh.”

The defense declined comment after the verdict, citing a gag order.

“As much as I am chomping at the bit, I am keeping my mouth shut,” said prosecutor Wes Lane.

Prosecutors say McVeigh and Nichols began acquiring the key ingredients for the bomb seven months before the blast, then met at a park near Junction City, Kan., to pack it inside a Ryder truck on April 18, 1995. Nichols was at his home in Kansas 200 miles away when the bomb went off.

Defense lawyers had planned on bringing up evidence that a shadowy group of conspirators, including members a white supremacist gang, helped McVeigh with the bombing. But Judge Steven Taylor refused to allow that evidence, saying the defense never showed that such people made any overt acts to further the bomb plot.



Nichols

Congratulations

on your Silver Wedding Anniversary

Bernardo & Zenaida Hiponia.

We LOVE you Mom & Dad.

May everyone witness another 25 years of your marriage.

Love from Jeaniffer & Jewel Hiponia-Cubangbang and the Jen-Marz family

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+red/blue

crm

DIRTY HARRY
CLEANS UP

Actor and director Clint Eastwood poses helps students in a fifth-grade class from Park View Center School in Simi Valley paint picnic tables at Franklin Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains in Los Angeles, Tuesday, May 25, 2004. Eastwood reprised his role on Tuesday as spokesman for Take Pride in America, an organization of volunteers who maintain public lands.

AP



Immigrants outlive US-born residents

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Immigrants who come to the United States live an average of three years longer than people born here, new research shows in a surprising finding that challenges some common beliefs. A growing body of evidence indicates the life span difference reflects both immigrants’ innate vitality and their reluctance to embrace Americans’ drive-thru, drive-everywhere mentality. They also smoke less. The life expectancy deficit is true for all races but is most dramatic among blacks. Immigrant black men live nine years lon-

ger than black men born in the United States, according to an analysis by a National Institutes of Health researcher. The study reviewed millions of death and health records from 1986-94. Though the numbers are old, more limited studies of recent data suggest the same patterns hold true, although life expectancy is generally rising. The records showed the average American-born black man could expect to reach 64, while a black man born overseas would likely live beyond 73 if he immigrated. In the case of an African-born man remaining in

his homeland, he might well have died before his 50th birthday. Perhaps most astonishing is that immigrants outlive the U.S.-born population even though they’re more likely to be poor and less likely to see a doctor, often a prescription for a shorter life. Such results may seem counterintuitive, but their explanation makes sense. Lifestyle is a powerful factor. Black immigrants are three times less likely to smoke than American-born blacks, according to NIH research, and far less likely to be obese.

Black immigrants drink less and exercise more, according to other federal research. It is not surprising, then, that national health statistics show black immigrants are far less likely than U.S.-born blacks to die of everything from lung cancer to liver cirrhosis. Obesity, too, is far more prevalent among American-born residents. Data from the mid-1990s showed that 22 percent of adult immigrants were obese, compared to 28 percent of U.S.-born adults. (Recent numbers suggest about 30 percent of all U.S. residents are obese.)

ACROSS THE NATION

Florida inmate is executed by injection

STARKE, Fla. (AP)—A man who said he killed a fellow prison inmate so the state of Florida would give him the death penalty was executed Wednesday. John Blackwelder, 49, received an injection of chemicals at Florida State Prison, a spokesman for Gov. Jeb Bush said. Blackwelder was convicted in the May 2000 strangling of Raymond Wigley, 39, who was serving a life term for murder. At the time, Blackwelder faced life without parole for a series of sex convictions. He said he killed Wigley and pleaded guilty to first-degree murder because he wanted to die but couldn’t bring himself to commit suicide. “I’m glad I get to go home,” Blackwelder said after being strapped to his gurney. “I’m proud to be a Christian, and I thank Jesus for saving me and allowing me to go home. Amen.” Blackwelder’s execution was delayed 24 hours after a prison inmate said he’d heard a second-hand claim that another inmate had confessed to Wigley’s killing.

Dellinger, one of the Chicago Seven, dies

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP)—Peace activist David Dellinger, one of the Chicago Seven arrested and tried for their part in the violent anti-war protests outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention, has died at 88. Dellinger died Tuesday, said Peggy Rocque, administrator of Heaton Woods, the Montpelier retirement home where the activist had been living. Dellinger was a pacifist who devoted much of his life to protesting. A member of the Old Left whose first arrest came in the 1930s during a union-organizing protest at Yale, he was a generation older than his Yippie co-defendants in the Chicago Seven case. At the Chicago Seven trial in 1969 and 1970, Dellinger and four co-defendants—Hayden, Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman and Rennie Davis - were convicted of conspiracy to incite a riot at the 1968 convention. Those convictions were overturned by a federal appeals court, which cited errors by U.S. District Judge Julius Hoffman.

WMD intel panel interviews David Kay

WASHINGTON (AP)—In its first official meeting Wednesday, the president’s commission investigating flawed intelligence on weapons of mass destruction heard from David Kay, the former Iraq weapons inspector whose criticism helped drive the panel’s creation. Kay, along with about a dozen other experts, appeared before the commission in a closed seven-hour session to brief the nine commissioners as they begin sorting out the quality of U.S. intelligence on the threat of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Kay, the former head of the Iraq Survey Group that is searching for the banned weapons, reinvigorated the debate on the war’s justification when he resigned in January and questioned whether weapons of mass destruction would ever be found.

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World

Caribbean flooding kills more than 660

By PETER PRENGAMAN
AP WRITER

JIMANI, Dominican Republic (AP)—Dominican soldiers used dogs and shovels to search for flood victims Wednesday while U.S. and Canadian troops hurried to neighboring Haitian towns, trying to assess the full scope of a disaster that has killed more than 660 people and left hundreds missing.

Authorities told families there was no time to identify many of the bodies because they were

badly decomposed and posed health risks if moved. Many bodies were dumped in a mass grave or buried by soldiers where they were found.

Survivors painted terrifying tales of sleeping families swept away in the floods Monday.

Leonardo Novas, a resident in the Dominican border town of Jimani, awoke to the screams of his infant son while water rose in his ramshackle wooden house. He quickly grabbed his wife and his son, and shouted to his brother next door to stay

inside, but it was too late.

“Everything’s gone - my house and five family members,” said Novas, 28, who had watched helplessly as his brother and his family were carried away in a crushing torrent of mud.

“I can’t find them,” he said. “I didn’t know they were burying them. They should let me find them first.”

More than 100 bodies were dumped in a mass grave outside the border town of Jimani, about 100 miles west of the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo.

Jimani is inhabited mostly by Haitian migrants who work as vendors and sugar cane cutters, trying to make a better life. Dominican officials said some of the Haitians who lost family members may have been living in the town illegally and scared to identify bodies.

Mudslides have prevented rescue teams from reaching parts of the two countries for days. Some 400 people were missing in the Dominican Republic and more than 160 were unaccounted for in Haiti.



AP

A dead body is seen in the Enriquillo lake, 10 kilometers (6 miles) from Jimani, Dominican Republic, about 200 kilometers (124 miles) southwest of Santo Domingo on Wednesday, May 26, 2004.

In Haiti, the death toll soared with officials reporting that more than 250 corpses were recovered and an additional 158 were missing and feared dead in the border town of Fond Verrette, near Jimani.

“The river took everything, there isn’t anything left,” said Jermanie Vulsont in Fond Verrette, who said the rushing water swept away her five children early Monday.

Troops from a U.S.-led multinational force sent to stabilize Haiti after President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted on Feb. 29 returned to Fond Verrette on Wednesday, ferrying supplies to about 3,000 desperate villagers and U.N. assessment teams.

The floods came first and then a landslide covered much of the village with gravel. Few houses were left standing and many villagers were staying with relatives hours away.

“For a while we didn’t even realize what we were standing on,” said U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Justin Collins, one of 20 U.S. Marines who went to help feed villagers biscuits and fruit. “We were standing on some parts of a neighborhood. It’s clear they need more food and water.”

Manie Ceceron, a 37-year-old mother who lost her five children said, “The rain came. I was in the house and I ran. I couldn’t see anything. I didn’t

see my children. I never saw my children.”

Workers recovered about 100 corpses in southern Grand Gosier and 100 more in the neighboring town of Mopou, said Haiti’s Civil Protection Director Marie Alta Jean-Baptiste. Another 50 corpses were found elsewhere across the country.

Help has not yet been able to reach Mopou and more than 150 are reportedly injured and without health care, the Haitian government said. Other towns were also in need.

The death tolls have been high in Haiti because the impoverished nation is nearly 90 percent deforested and many of the poor build poorly constructed homes.

The Dominican government had issued an alert Sunday, warning people that rivers may swell with the rains. But Jimani has only limited access to radio broadcasts.

As sunshine baked the soggy earth Wednesday, residents tried to repair damaged houses. Hundreds on both sides of the border were destroyed and international organizations were considering relocating several families left homeless in the rains.

The floods were some of the deadliest in a decade. In 1994, Tropical Storm Gordon caused mudslides that buried at least 829 Haitians.

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Four nations seek Iraq resolution changes

By EDITH M. LEDERER
AP WRITER

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Four key nations proposed major changes Wednesday to the U.S.-British draft resolution on Iraq, moves that would give the new government control over the Iraqi army and police and require the multinational force to consult on military actions except for self-defense.

A three-page proposal by China—which diplomats said was supported by Russia, France and Germany—would give the interim government that takes over on June 30 the right to decide whether foreign forces remain in the country and limit the multinational mandate to January 2005.

Both changes would bolster the sovereign powers of the Iraqi interim government and extend far greater authority than the resolution introduced to the U.N. Security Council on Monday by Britain and the United States.

The proposal, obtained by The Associated Press, was submitted to council members Wednesday afternoon during a closed-door discussion of the U.S.-British draft.

Meanwhile, U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said that Hussein al-Shahristani, mentioned in recent days as a candidate for the post of prime minister, took himself out of the competition Wednesday.

A statement released by his spokesman at the United Nations said that there was no doubt “Mr. Shahristani could serve his country well in a number of positions in government.”

“Mr. Shahrestani, however, has himself clarified that he would prefer to serve his country in other ways,” the statement said.

The four-nation proposal would require the multinational force to “consult with the interim government in respect of military actions except for self-defense.” These issues are not mentioned in the U.S.-British draft.

The amendment would also determine “that the interim government of Iraq shall exercise full sovereignty, in the political, economic, security, judicial and diplomatic areas, including the power to control and dispose all the natural and economic resources, sign economic cooperation agreements and contracts, and enjoy judicial independence and the power to administer prisons in Iraq.”

The U.S.-British draft endorses the formation of a sovereign interim Iraqi government that will “assume the responsibility and authority” for governing the country by June 30, but doesn’t spell out its powers.

It also makes no mention of the control of prisons, a highly sensitive issue following revelations of physical and sexual abuse of Iraqi detainees by U.S. soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison in

Cleric offers to pull fighters from Najaf

NAJAF, Iraq (AP)—Radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr agreed Wednesday to withdraw his militia from Najaf and hand the city back to Iraqi police, the government said, raising hopes for an end to weeks of fighting that threatened some of Shia Islam’s holiest sites.

The announcement by National Security Adviser Mouwafak al-Rubaie took place after U.S. troops arrested al-Sadr’s key lieutenant in a pre-dawn raid. Clashes late Tuesday and early Wednesday between U.S. troops and militia fighters killed 24 people and wounded nearly 50 here, hospital and militia officials said.

There was no confirmation by al-Sadr. However, an agreement to abandon Najaf would be a major step toward ending his uprising in the south only weeks before a new Iraqi government takes power June 30, formally ending the U.S.-led occupation.

Also Wednesday, three Marines were killed in Anbar province “while conducting security and stability operations,” the military said, decline to release further details because of security concerns. The province includes the western suburbs of Baghdad as well as Fallujah, Ramadi and Qaim.

Al-Rubaie, a Shiite and former Governing Council member, said al-Sadr made the offer in a letter to the city’s Shiite clerical hierarchy. According to al-Rubaie, al-Sadr offered to remove his fighters from Najaf - except for those who live there - but demanded that U.S. and other coalition troops “return to base,” allowing Iraqi police to regain control of the city.

The young Shiite radical also demanded “broad discussions” within the Shiite community over the future of his al-Mahdi Army militia and that legal proceedings against him in a murder case be deferred until then.

Baghdad which have sparked an international outcry.

The U.S.-British draft reaffirms authorization for the multinational force currently in Iraq to continue to maintain security and stability, under a unified command. It would review the force’s mandate in 12 months or at the request of the transitional government which will be elected by early next year.

A senior State Department official noted that the administra-

tion has said that U.S. forces will withdraw from Iraq if it is asked to do so by Iraqi authorities.

The official said no one can demand the departure of the multinational force except for the Baghdad government.

The Chinese proposal would authorize the formation and deployment of a multinational force to assume “primary responsibility for security during the transitional period.”

Its mandate would expire in January 2005 when elections are scheduled to be held. The Chinese plan says that any extension “should respect the views of the new Iraqi government to be elected and decided by the Security Council.”



Armed militiamen patrol the streets of Najaf, Iraq, Wednesday, May 26, 2004.

AP

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AP
Palestinians carry for burial the bodies of 14-year-old Jamal Bajsh, center, and Hamas militants Saad Eleian, bottom, and Saed Qutob, top left, along the streets of the West Bank town of Nablus Monday.

Sharon prepares new ‘disengagement’ plan

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s revised “unilateral disengagement” plan has four stages, replacing a proposal for a one-step pullout from the Gaza Strip, an Israeli official said Wednesday.

Sharon is to present the new formula to Cabinet ministers on Thursday, ahead of a Cabinet debate Sunday, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. He declined to give details of the four stages.

In Gaza early Thursday, meanwhile, three Israeli tanks and a bulldozer entered Palestinian territory outside the town of Deir el-Balah and destroyed three Palestinian houses, witnesses and Palestinian security officials said.

The military said an operation was in an area where militants operate. On Wednesday, two Israeli

soldiers were slightly wounded in a Palestinian rocket attack nearby, and soldiers destroyed a rocket launcher on the roof of a building where Palestinians were living, the military said.

Media reports indicate the disengagement process would start with evacuating three or four isolated settlements in the Gaza Strip. That would be followed by removal of the other Gaza settlements, a military redeployment in Gaza and evacuation of four small settlements in the northern West Bank.

The order of the steps is not known, nor is the timetable for implementing them, though it is not expected to be quick. Sharon has pledged to complete construction of a separation barrier before making any moves in the West Bank, and that is about a year away.

Israel says it needs the barrier to stop Palestinian suicide bombers and other infiltrators who have killed hundreds of Israelis during more than three years of Palestinian-Israeli violence. Palestinians object to the route, which dips deep into the West Bank to enclose main Jewish settlements.

Sharon’s Likud Party turned down his original plan in a referendum on May 2, though it had U.S. backing. After the party veto, the “Quartet” of Mideast mediators—the United States, European Union, Russia and the United Nations—also endorsed the pullout plan.

Palestinians have been ambivalent about the proposal, demanding coordination with the Israelis over a withdrawal but welcoming, in principle, any Israeli evacuation of the Palestinian areas.

DPW022

US seeks to rid world of ‘dirty bombs’

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—Moving to ease the threat of “dirty bomb” attacks, U.S. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham announced a \$450 million global cleanup of nuclear materials Wednesday to keep them out of terrorist hands.

The Global Threat Reduction Initiative would remove and secure high-risk radioactive materials that pose a menace to the international community, Abraham said.

“Where 100 years ago authorities had to worry about the anarchist placing a bomb in the downtown square, now we must worry about the terrorist who places that bomb in the square, but packed with radiological

material,” he told an International Atomic Energy Agency conference on nuclear safety.

The initiative was praised by the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, but some independent experts said it would not go far enough fast enough.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks on the United States, concerns have grown that terrorists might be trying to acquire material for a so-called dirty bomb—a device that uses conventional explosives to spread low-level radioactive material over several city blocks.

The approach of the Aug. 13-29 Athens Olympics has focused fresh attention on the threat.

The United States provided

Greek police and border officials with radiation detection equipment this week to help guard the Games against a nuclear or dirty bomb. Abraham said the security package was similar to one provided during the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

Efforts to collect, secure and dispose of nuclear material began long ago, but the new program offers an “accelerated and more structured framework” for the work, he said.

Dirty bombs use lower-grade radioactive isotopes, such as those used in medicine or research. If a dirty bomb were to be detonated, the radiation release probably would be small.

Sudan government, rebels sign peace pact

NAIVASHA, Kenya (AP)—Sudan’s government and rebels signed key agreements on Wednesday, resolving the last remaining issues needed to end Africa’s longest-running conflict.

The adversaries signed three protocols on power-sharing and how to administer three disputed areas in central Sudan, wrapping up outstanding issues that had prevented them from reaching a final deal.

All that remains for the government and the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army to work out are procedural matters to end the 21-year civil war, in which more than 2 million people have died, mostly from war-induced famine.

The peace process taking place in Naivasha, 60 miles northwest of Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, does not include insurgents fighting a separate rebellion in Darfur region of western Sudan.

It could take months to determine whether the diplomatic solution will translate to peace on the ground. The signing of the agreements on Wednesday was delayed for several hours because of last-minute disputes over power-sharing.

A Western diplomat at the

talks said U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell telephoned rebel leader John Garang to discuss the delays.

In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the signing will trigger a process leading to the establishment of normal relations with Sudan if certain conditions are met.

Boucher said these include the completion of a comprehensive peace agreement to end the southern conflict and an end to the violence in Darfur, where a 15-month rebellion has made more than 1 million people homeless.

France: No religion in EU Constitution

PARIS (AP)—The French prime minister said Wednesday there is no need for Christian references in the European Union’s hotly debated constitution.

“The European project is secular,” said Jean-Pierre Raffarin. “Our future is a European society which should include secularism as a founding value.”

France and Belgium have strongly opposed including religious references in a draft constitution. But Italy and Poland, backed by Pope John Paul II, want the charter to acknowledge Christianity’s role in Europe.

Raffarin, speaking on France Inter radio, said there was “no reason” to amend the draft, which says the EU draws “inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe.”

“The Christian heritage of Europe is clear. It cannot be contested. It is something that is engraved in our history,” Raffarin said.

But he added: “I do not see a consensus today among union member countries for a shift on this text.”

Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, speaking in France’s parliament Wednesday, also defended the draft.

“Everyone can recognize themselves in this text, whatever their faith, convictions and philosophy,” he said.

The place of religion in the charter’s preamble has been hotly debated since negotiations on the constitution began in 2002. Foreign ministers from Poland, Italy, Portugal, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia and the Czech Republic this week proposed that “the Christian roots of Europe” be looked at again in discussions on the text.

The constitution seeks to simplify decision-making in the EU and prevent a minority of states from blocking decisions.

Amnesty: US flouting human rights

By JANE WARDELL
AP WRITER

LONDON (AP)—The United States and its supporters in the war against terror are flouting human rights in the pursuit of a global security agenda that has made the world more dangerous, Amnesty International said Wednesday.

The abuse of Iraqi prisoners by U.S. troops was the consequence of a Bush administration policy “to pick and choose which bits of international law it will apply and where,” the group’s secretary general, Irene Khan, said in presenting the annual assessment of human rights.

Khan condemned attacks by terror groups such as al-Qaida, but said the U.S. response was driving the most sustained erosion of human rights and international law in 50 years.

“As a strategy, the war on terror is bankrupt of vision and bereft of principle,” Khan said. “Sacrificing human rights in the name of national security, turning a blind eye to abuse abroad and using pre-emptive military force where and when the powerful choose to act has damaged justice and freedom, and made the world a more dangerous and divided place.”

Asked about the report’s assertions, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, “I dismiss that.”



Khan

“The war on terrorism has protected the human rights of some 25 million people in Afghanistan, and some 25 million people in Iraq,” he said in Washington. “The war on terror has led to the liberation of some 50 million people in those countries, and the United States is a leader when it comes to protecting human rights, and we will continue to be.”

Kahn said Amnesty wrote to the British and U.S. governments a year ago detailing allegations of torture, ill-treatment, deaths in custody and other abuses in Iraq.

“We have some form of response from the British and none to this date from the Americans,” she said.

“It seems that accountability in Washington D.C. is better generated by Kodak,” she said, referring to the recent publication of photographs of U.S.

troops abusing and humiliating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad.

Amnesty said it was denied access to both Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, where the United States is holding hundreds of foreign nationals in indefinite detention.

It said it has credible reports that a Chinese government delegation was sent to Guantanamo in September 2002 to help interrogate Uighur Muslims being held there and used techniques including having inmates stand for long periods and depriving them of sleep.

The report criticized Spain, France and Uzbekistan, among other nations, for what it called “regressive” anti-terrorist legislation and restrictions on freedom since the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

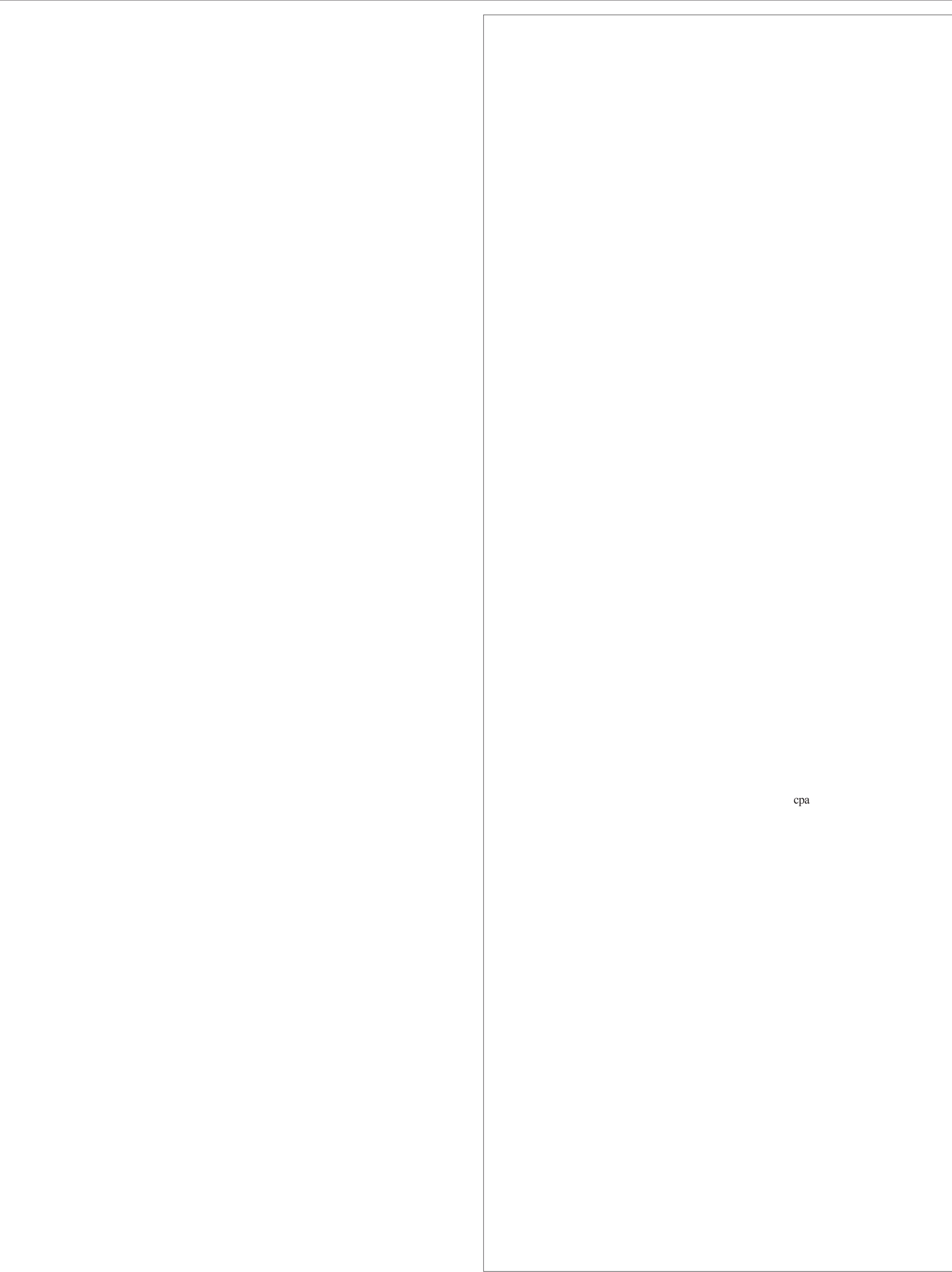
Britain was singled out for holding 14 foreign nationals under anti-terrorism laws that allow indefinite detention without charges.

British police disclosed last month that more than half the 572 people arrested in anti-terror raids in Britain since Sept. 11, 2001, were released without charge, and fewer than one in five were charged with terrorism-related offenses.

Khan said governments around the world were flouting human rights “with impunity and audacity” in the name of the war on terror.

Science & Technology

Life & Style



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Drama queen casts shadow on sister's wedding plans

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I am being married in a couple of months. My biggest worry is that my sister, "Virginia," will do something to ruin my wedding day. She has never been able to handle not being the center of attention, and has caused more scenes and dropped more "bombshells" than I can count.

Some examples: Virginia announced her engagement to a man she had met two weeks earlier on Thanksgiving. She eloped with him on New Year's Eve—then divorced him in a hurry so she could marry husband No. 2 in time for Valentine's Day. She has started screaming matches in the middle of Christmas dinners, and she and one of her boyfriends had a knock-down-drag-out fight at a relative's wedding reception that embarrassed our entire family.

I know Virginia's behavior stems from deep self-esteem issues and emotional problems, and I feel sorry for her. But honestly, I'd like to have just one drama-free family event where everyone enjoys themselves instead of waiting for the next bomb to drop.

Our parents are no help. Mother excuses everything Virginia does by saying, "We need to be more supportive of her and keep our mouths shut." My father copes by steering clear of the whole thing.

I am seriously considering eloping because I don't see any other way to avoid having Virginia attend my wedding. The sad part is, I will regret not having my parents, family and friends around me on my happy day. My fiancé knows my sister is big trouble and says he'll support whatever decision I make. Any advice on how I can have my wedding cake and eat it, too?

BRIDE-TO-BE IN GEORGIA

DEAR BRIDE-TO-BE: Have a private sisterly chat with Virginia and tell her your concerns, because it appears they are valid. Your sister may not be conscious of what she's been doing. That said, take the precaution of asking some of your relatives to escort her out if she starts a scene.

You and your fiancé appear to be mutually supportive. I wish you every happiness on your wedding day.

DEAR ABBY: I am the mother of five sons, and I'm concerned about kids not getting the facts of life from their parents.

My husband thought that warning the boys "not to do it" was enough. So, while their dad was away, I sat each son down privately and gave him "the facts." I also spelled out exactly what his responsibilities would be.

I made it clear that if my son was having a sexual encounter, he was to ALWAYS use a condom—even if the girl said she was on the pill or "safe." I told him that if he was too embarrassed to buy them himself, I would provide them.

I emphasized that by being careful and prepared, he and the girl could avoid a sexually transmitted disease or an unwanted pregnancy.

Abby, my five sons are now 21 to 31. None of them became a teenage parent.

Mothers, please don't leave "the talk" to your husband. Some fathers do an excellent job, but if you have one like mine, you owe it to your children (and their future mates and your future grandchildren) to keep these young people tuned in, safe and healthy.

PROUD OF MY FIVE SONS

DEAR PROUD: You are a woman after my own heart—an activist. You wisely opened an important dialogue with your sons, rather than risking that they'd get misinformation about this important subject from their peers. Other parents can learn from you.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more attractive person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Cattrall declines 'Sex and the City' film

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Kim Cattrall said she didn't want any more "Sex and the City," so that means her co-stars Sarah Jessica Parker, Cynthia Nixon and Kristin Davis won't be getting any either.

At least for a while.

HBO representatives said Cattrall's refusal led the cable channel to drop the idea of a feature film based on the popular series, which ended

its six-season run this year.

"Kim felt fortunate to have enjoyed six wonderful years, both personally and professionally, playing Samantha on 'Sex and the City,'" said Cattrall spokeswoman Marvet Britto in a recent statement.

"She would have loved to have done the movie and made a deal to do the movie, but waited as long as possible with no script or start date and felt

she had to take other offers that were presented to her after the hold period had passed."

Cattrall has instead signed on to shoot "Ice Princess" for Walt Disney Pictures.

It's possible that she could revisit the role of the seductress Samantha at a later time.

"Kim would of course love to do the film and would be happy to revisit the project in the future," Britto said.

There may have been other obstacles in the road to a "Sex" movie.

The trade newspaper Variety reported this week that Cattrall wanted script approval, which the other actresses were denied. Parker, the show's central character, was also to be paid more, according to Variety, and Cattrall wanted the same fee—and was rejected.

Eastwood is spokesman for take pride

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP)—Clint Eastwood wants you to volunteer, punk. The "Dirty Harry" star reprised his role Tuesday as spokesman for Take Pride in America, an organization of volunteers who maintain public lands.

Eastwood previously promoted the group in the 1980s.

On Tuesday, he posed for photographers while helping students in a fifth-grade class clean up a hiking trail and paint picnic tables at Franklin Canyon in the Santa Monica Mountains, adjacent to Beverly Hills.

Take Pride in America is a federal organization that supports volunteers who tend to public parks, forests, grasslands, reservoirs, wildlife refuges, playgrounds and historic sites.

Clint Eastwood arrives to the 10th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards, held at the Shrine Auditorium, in this Feb. 22, 2004 file photo in Los Angeles, California. AP

Madonna cancels show, ill with flu

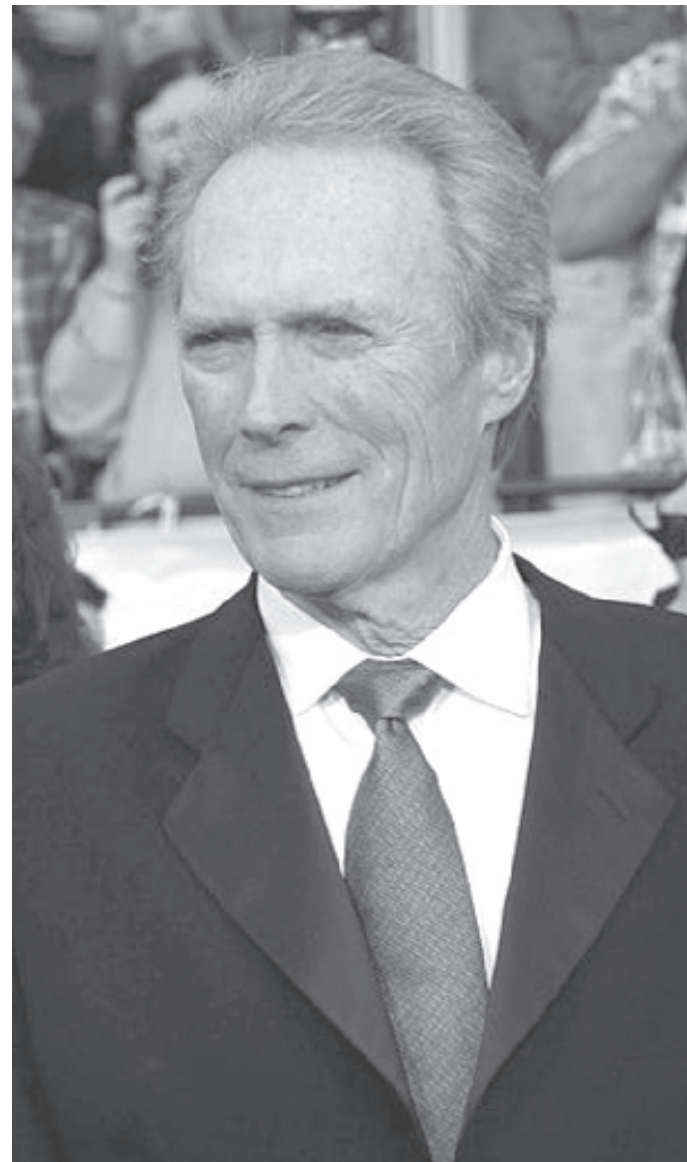
LOS ANGELES (AP)—Madonna canceled the second date of her "Re-Invention" tour due to a stomach flu, according to a statement posted on her Web site.

Madonna was ordered by her doctor to cancel the Tuesday night show, but the statement said those tickets would be honored at Wednesday's performance.

"She will be back at 100 percent and can't wait to entertain her fans," the statement read.

The 18-city tour started Monday and ends Sept. 5 in Paris with stops in Las Vegas, New York, Toronto, Manchester and London.

Madonna earlier this week canceled three Israeli stops scheduled for September because of violence in the region, including the killing of the leader of the militant group Hamas.



The Rock, Ice Cube to present at MTV show

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Rock, Vin Diesel, Paris Hilton and Ice Cube will share the stage as presenters at the upcoming MTV Movie Awards.

Other presenters announced Tuesday by the music channel include Ashton Kutcher, "Friends" star Matthew Perry, Queen Latifah and Marlon Wayans and Shawn Wayans.

They will join previously announced participants Snoop Dogg, Dave Chappelle, Kirsten Dunst, Eve, Jimmy Fallon, Kate Hudson and Scarlett Johansson.

Lindsay Lohan, the 17-year-old star of "Mean Girls," is set to host the show, which will be broadcast June 10.

"Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" has the most MTV Movie Award nominations with six, including best movie and best on-screen team for co-stars Johnny Depp and Orlando Bloom.



Dwayne Johnson, also known as "The Rock," is shown Houston, Texas, in this Jan. 29, 2004, file photo.

D12, the Beastie Boys and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are among the bands scheduled to perform. The will be taped June 5 at Sony Pictures Studios in Culver City, Calif.

Jackson team wants prosecution documents

By ROBERT JABLON
AP WRITER

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Michael Jackson's lawyers claim prosecutors in the child molestation case are dragging their feet in giving the defense access to interviews with dozens of witnesses and hundreds of items seized in raids.

By law, the defense must be given "discovery" of prosecution evidence so it can prepare to fight it at trial.

"Mr. Jackson's right to a fair trial is jeopardized by the undue delay of discovery by the prosecution," the defense said in a May 13 motion requesting that the judge set a deadline for prosecutors to turn over materials currently being withheld.

The document, made public Tuesday, illustrates the massive nature of the Jackson investigation, noting there are "dozens, if not over 100" witnesses involved.

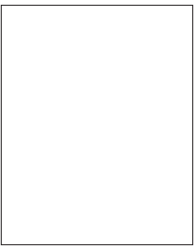
The new defense motion indicated the prosecution did turn over more than 1,100 pages of documents, including police reports and summaries of witness interviews, 51 audiotapes and two videotapes in three "waves" since the initial discovery request in January.

The sheer volume of evidence that the defense wants to examine could force a delay in the trial. Attorneys had said they would be ready by December, and the judge has said he wants to begin this year.

Jackson has pleaded not guilty to 10 felony charges of child molestation, administering an intoxicating agent, and conspiracy involving allegations of child abduction, false imprisonment and extortion.

The defense claims the prosecution has yet to allow it to examine more than 300 items seized in sheriff's raids at Jackson's Los Olivos home and other locations last November. The prosecution has said the items are still undergoing forensic examination and are not available, the court papers stated.

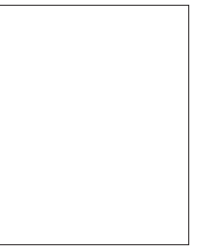
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